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Ego development or ego denial
Is there a Christian case for a healthy ego?

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**Ego development or ego denial:
Is there a Christian case for a healthy ego?**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the nature of the ego, drawing upon Christian and secular conceptions, in order to determine whether it is something to be affirmed or denied. Contemporary perspectives which either overvalue the individual self, or retort by refuting it, are questioned in the light of psychology, spirituality and Christian doctrine. I have been vexed by the existence of two seemingly opposing views within Christian popular culture. Those who look to the mystical tradition, the Spirituality of the Desert, claim that self-denial is the path to spiritual enlightenment and discovery of the true self; the ego is a false self. By contrast, the world of psychology endorses the merits of a healthy ego. Accordingly, psychology has made a significant contribution to pastoral theology and the life of church communities, especially in relation to personality dynamics. I seek to overcome this dichotomy through a broadening of our understanding of the self and adoption of the notion of personhood arising from a theological anthropology, which includes a relational understanding of *imago Dei*, Christological *kenosis* and the social doctrine of the Trinity. Findings are related to the paradoxical demand of Christian discipleship, encapsulated by Jesus' teaching that his followers must lose themselves in order to be save themselves. The thesis concludes with a more practical turn, applying the insights of the earlier psychology and spirituality chapters, to assess tools for daily life for enhancing emotional and spiritual intelligence, which are taken as interdependent. The goal is for the ego to become servant, not master. The overall approach is a theoretical interdisciplinary one, drawing on the perspectives of philosophy, sociology, psychology, spirituality and theology, in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the ego.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Our Contemporary Context

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake... will save it. (Mark 8:34b-35)¹

Jesus articulates the paradox at the heart of Christian discipleship: self-preservation entails letting go of self. To gain is to lose and to lose is to gain. This is seriously at odds with twenty-first century Western culture, where the word “self” is more typically yoked with “indulge”, “find”, “be”, “belief” and “assert”, than with “denial”, “discipline”, “control” or “sacrifice”. Expressive individualism is the order of the day. In my experience of taking funerals as a parish priest, Frank Sinatra’s *I did it my way* is a popular music request. The departed is applauded for living his or her life fully as s/he chose. We live in a climate where people are constantly seeking attention. Considerable hours are spent in the domains of Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, perpetually posting self images for accumulated followers. Lives are exposed for all to see. The un-viewed life is not worth living. In many walks of life, the bigger the ego the better. The grasping ego is epitomised by the Trump phenomenon. After winning his third primary, Donald Trump declared: “Now we are going to be greedy for the United States. We are going to grab and grab and grab.” This tactic won him a place at the White House as the forty-fifth president of America.

Whilst Christians are called to be counter cultural, not conformed to this world (Romans 12:2), it is debatable whether ego-denial is the answer. This study is motivated by the existence of two ostensibly opposing views within Christianity about the ego. On the one hand, the ego is perceived as having a bad press in the contemplative and mystical tradition. Desert Spirituality advocates self-denial as the true path to spiritual enlightenment. The ego is a false self to be dismantled. On the other hand, the world of psychology, concerned with ego development, has contributed greatly to pastoral theology and the healthy functioning of church communities. In particular, an understanding of personality theory has helped individuals in their relationships and spiritual life. A robust ego is needed to manage effectively the intra and inter-personal life. This perceived tension between contemplative spirituality and psychology begs to

¹ All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless specified otherwise.

be resolved. We will probe these two standpoints, in order that they may be reconciled. In doing so, it will become evident that they are not quite as polarised as is portrayed on a popular level.

In its quest for the authentic self, this thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon the perspectives of philosophy, sociology, psychology, spirituality and theology. The methodology is influenced by my church ministry context, wherein contemporary Christians are much informed and formed by “pop” psychology and spirituality. Accordingly, I analyse popular psychology/spirituality in the light of scholarly sources in order to differentiate between the less credible and those which are in keeping with Christian orthodoxy and beneficial for psycho/spiritual advancement. I identify a problem in popular receptions of self; survey academic writings on the self from psychological and spiritual points of view; engage in a theological exploration to situate and integrate findings on the self; and finally endorse certain practical methods for mastering the ego in the light of the academic findings.

The psychological and spiritual counterparts employ terminologies for the human being that warrant brief definition here, to be expanded upon later in the thesis. The terms “ego”, “self” and “person” are variously defined but I will be using them in the following senses. The term “ego”, derived from the Freudian and Jungian conceptions,² denotes the conscious self that we identify with the first person singular. The ego can be real or unreal, depending upon where it draws its sense of identity from. There is more to us than ego. The integrity of the ego depends upon it remaining connected to the greater Self. I make a distinction between the terms self/ego, and the Jungian notion of “Self”, demarcating the totality of our being, both conscious and unconscious,³ which at its deepest level encounters the divine. This monist model, in which the soul/mind are physiologically embodied, is consonant with the Judaeo-Christian understanding: “In nonreductive physicalism there is no soul, but rather human beings have biologically embedded capacities that facilitate knowing and relating to God.... A person does not have a soul, but rather in a sense, *is* soul.”⁴ In similar vein, the contemplative tradition includes the concept of the “heart”, not to be understood in an emotional sense. For mystics down the ages, it is the organ of spiritual awareness. The impetus for choosing

² Freud, *The Ego and The Id*, 7; Michael Fordham, *Explorations into the Self*, 95.

³ Jung, *Dreams*, 115.

⁴ Balswick, King and Reimer, *The Reciprocating Self*, 25-26. Italics original.

good or evil comes from the heart.⁵ Thomas Merton describes the heart as “the deepest psychological ground of one’s personality, the inner sanctuary where self-awareness goes beyond analytical reflection and opens out into metaphysical and theological confrontation with the Abyss of the unknown yet present – one who is ‘more intimate to us than we are to ourselves.’”⁶

As we venture into the realms of Christian doctrine, the term “person” encapsulates this relational dimension to being human. The notion of personhood is derived from the reciprocal dynamic of the inter-trinitarian relations.⁷ As Robert Spaemann asserts, whilst the identity of each person is unique, personhood arises only in a plurality: “Solipsism... is incompatible with the concept of the person.”⁸ We become aware of and reciprocate the gaze of others. “Persons are beings for whom the self-being of another is real, and whose own self has become real to another.”⁹ Spaemann concludes that all *homo sapiens* are persons from birth, or conception even, and remain so until death, on the basis of our genealogical connection with the human family; we are “kindred, who stand from the outset in a personal relation to one another.”¹⁰ Jacques Maritain makes a distinction between “individuality” and “personality”, drawing upon the principles of Thomas Aquinas.¹¹ Individuality is corporeal in nature, “being that which excludes from oneself all that other men are, could be described as the narrowness of the ego, forever threatened and forever eager *to grasp for itself*.” By contrast, personality finds its existence in the “deepest and highest dimensions of being.”¹² Personality/the person, is related to the absolute and to other humans.¹³

There exists a dichotomy between self-affirmation and self-denial in popular culture, including church culture. The uninhibited ego largely has free reign but figures have emerged, that swim against the tide of ego. We will examine this minor current but first, we draw upon a mix of academic and other voices to paint the present-day landscape of excessive individualism, in which autonomous individuals authenticate themselves how they wish. It can be a bewildering place. According to Anthony Elliott, contemporary

⁵ Spaemann, *Persons*, 20-21.

⁶ Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 38.

⁷ Spaemann, *Persons*, 21-27.

⁸ Spaemann, *Persons*, 40.

⁹ Spaemann, *Persons*, 77.

¹⁰ Spaemann, *Persons*, 240-248.

¹¹ Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, 11-30.

¹² Maritain, *Person*, 37,40. Italics original.

¹³ Maritain, *Person*, 41-42.

culture reveals the self as “a rich plurality of contending discourses, practices, images, fantasies and representations”.¹⁴ Furthermore, individuals must keep pace with the ever increasing rate of change. Zygmunt Bauman holds the conviction that in Postmodernity, “change is *the only* permanence, and uncertainty *the only* certainty.”¹⁵ Endorsing the work of the American sociologist Richard Sennett, Elliott highlights the disorientating effects of the new capitalism and demands for flexibility and innovation in the world of work upon self identity. As the coherent life narrative breaks down, the mature and stable, durable sense of self achievable in the past, is superseded by a fragmented and dislocated self-experience, a “supermarket identity”, character structure orientated towards the superficial and the fleeting.¹⁶ Elliott identifies fragmentation as one of the core contours of postmodern selfhood:

[T]he contemporary self is so fragmented, multiple and dispersed that the symbolic consistency and narrative texture of experience disintegrates. In a world invaded by new technologies and saturated with flashy commodities, the self loses its consistency, and becomes brittle, broken or shattered.¹⁷

The shopping mall is the focal point of society. Bauman identifies the activity and addiction of shopping as one race in which every member of society is running. Shopping encompasses every aspect of our lives and livelihoods: “the competence most needed in our world of ostensibly infinite ends is that of skilful and indefatigable shopper.”¹⁸ Identities are created through consumerism. “I shop, therefore, I am.” According to an article in *The Times* by Emily Davies, we are what we own: “shopping... is your ticket to an idealised self.” The culture of shopping “has become increasingly about image rather than substance.”¹⁹ This is apparent in the change in approach to advertising. It used to be about the quality and effectiveness of the product, now image and personal preference, based upon the “feel good factor” of the product takes precedence. Products themselves become the feelings. It is not about buying goods but identities. Bauman writes, “it is the ability to ‘shop around’ in the supermarket of identities, the degree of genuine or putative consumer freedom to select one’s identity... that becomes the royal road to the fulfilment of identity fantasies... one is free to make and unmake identities at will.”²⁰ Identity has ceased to be an ontological category and become functional, something we possess, and we can have more than

¹⁴ Elliott, *Concepts of the Self*, 148.

¹⁵ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, viii. Italics original.

¹⁶ Elliott, *Self*, 138-140.

¹⁷ Elliott, *Self*, 144-145.

¹⁸ Bauman, *Modernity*, 73-74.

¹⁹ Emily Davies, “Buying your Self,” *The Times*, April 24, 2004.

²⁰ Bauman, *Modernity*, 83.

one.²¹ We are what we construct ourselves to be. It is all about image and the latest is best. Pop stars, such as Madonna and Lady Gaga, feel constantly compelled to re-invent themselves, abandoning their inner cores to a succession of masks.

In social theory, the preponderance of DIY identities has been captured by the term “individualization”, denoting self-innovation, reflexivity and experimentation, fuelled by the self-help culture and its promise of the “new you”.²² On the one hand individualization is portrayed as the privatising of life, a matter of subjective value, essentially the project of self-transformation. On the other hand, it is deeply bound up with globalization, embedded in social and technological systems which impinge upon the self.²³ Elliott supplements the theory of individualization with a further term, “new individualism”, to identify other aspects to self-definition and transformation, linked to the language and ideology of the makeover culture of reinvention. The paradigm pervades the mission statements of numerous makeover service providers from life coaches and personal trainers to plastic surgeons: “today’s ‘plastic’ culture of reinvention, reorganization and flexibility carries profound consequences for the private and public lives of individuals.”²⁴ Elliott identifies four key institutional drivers for the new individualism: Firstly, a relentless emphasis on self-reinvention, entailing continual self-reconstruction. Consumerism pressurises people to transform every aspect of their lives. Secondly: an endless hunger for instant change. Thirdly, speed, social acceleration and accelerated change of the self. The self “turns into performance, presentation and public relations.” Fourthly, short-termism: the end of a job-for-life or career within a single organization heralds a “‘new economy’ - flexible, mobile, networked.”²⁵ Elliott adds that the new individualism is a cultural form in which the boundaries between self and society begin to blur in a highly mobile world: “the self is continually redefined and reorganized through globally connected networks of information and communication.”²⁶ Elliott concludes that such changes are not necessarily positive and carry debilitating consequences for self-identity.²⁷

²¹ Frances Ward, *Why Rousseau was Wrong*, 8.

²² Elliott, *Self*, 61-62.

²³ Elliott, *Self*, 165-167.

²⁴ Elliott, *Self*, 170-171.

²⁵ Elliott, *Self*, 172-175.

²⁶ Elliott, *Self*, 176-178.

²⁷ Elliott, *Self*, 194.

In this climate, individualism has led to the atomisation of society, although, in times of tragedy people still come together, as witnessed in the recent terror attacks across Europe. The historian John Marsh observes that society has become a collection of individuals rather than a community. “Community spirit has dwindled – the outcome is greater loneliness... We do not thrive as atomised individuals.... there is a loss of a sense of meaning and growing alienation.”²⁸ The theologian Frances Ward regards the British riots in the summer of 2011 as an unfortunate consequence of our disaffected, alienated, materialist, “rights” orientated culture, revealing a profoundly ugly face of Britain, with thousands taking to the streets motivated by greed, resentment and a sense of entitlement.²⁹ It was “a toxic mix of a romantic understanding of the individual, whose main, if not sole purpose in life is to seek self-fulfilment, and an economic ideology that turns the individual into a consumer, and puts value on material wealth.”³⁰

According to the popular Christian author, Timothy Keller, the prevailing belief today is that people misbehave due to a lack of self-esteem because they have too low a view of themselves. Keller highlights the reversal of pre-modern and modern views on self-opinion. Traditional cultures believed that *hubris*, pride, or having too high a view of oneself, was the root cause of all the evil in the world. Now, Western culture has developed the opposite consensus.³¹ This is substantiated by the psychiatrist Glynn Harrison, who charts the meteoric rise of self-esteem ideology. The term was first coined by the American psychologist William James.³² Later psychoanalysts, notably Freud, Adler and Horney related the idea to early child development.³³ At the popular level, these complex theories were condensed into the simple concept of low self-worth, seen as a condition that affects practically everyone and is perceived to be the cause of a wide range of psychological and social issues. The remedy is to booster self-esteem.³⁴ By the turn of the millennium self-esteem was in the top three topics in social psychology research.³⁵ The final push was the growth of new humanistic theories of human development by the likes of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, leading to the Human Potential Movement, which proclaimed the incredible power of the individual to

²⁸ Marsh, *The Liberal Delusion*, 51.

²⁹ Frances Ward, *Rousseau*, 18,54-55.

³⁰ Frances Ward, *Rousseau*, 81-82.

³¹ Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, 9-10.

³² Harrison, *The Big Ego Trip*, 26.

³³ Harrison, *Ego*, 28-34.

³⁴ Harrison, *Ego*, 36-37,43.

³⁵ Harrison, *Ego*, 41.

transform oneself for the better; that given the right conditions, the natural inclination of the human psyche is disposed towards growth and the good.³⁶

On the more popular level, the journalist Will Storr takes up the mantle to uncover the false premises of self-esteem ideology and the Human Potential Movement, which also pervaded the political arena.³⁷ Storr illustrates how the self-esteem/self-actualization era, in placing huge expectations on the self, has led to an epidemic of perfectionism, which, in turn, has led to a mental health crisis.³⁸ Storr denounces the belief that we can be anything we want to be as “the dark lie at the heart of the age of perfectionism.” The cold truth is: “You’re limited. Imperfect.”³⁹ Once we start pursuing goals that recognize our limitations, that are meaningful to us and over which we have efficacy, we will all be a lot happier.⁴⁰ Yet, the Western world has become enthralled to the ideal self, extolling the god-like self.⁴¹ Harrison recollects: “The age of the individualist had arrived. From now on it was ‘do your own thing’... what mattered to us was speaking from the heart, getting in touch with your true feelings and being yourself.” He concludes that the legacy of this cultural paradigm shift is all around us today, “due to an unholy amalgam of psychological science and the growing cultural narcissism.”⁴² Various examples can be found. In the Girl Guide promise, duty to God has been dropped in favour of promising “to be true to myself”. Self-esteem dogma has infiltrated the education system.⁴³ Marsh contends that the imperative of self-discovery and realising one’s own potential makes obligations to others secondary or non-existent.⁴⁴ This has been a recurrent theme in films from *Dead Poets Society*,⁴⁵ to *Shirley Valentine*⁴⁶ and *American Beauty*.⁴⁷ The fact that these rank among my personal favourites shows my unwitting enculturation. More troubling still is *The Times* report on the practice of “sologamy”, the trend for brides to marry themselves, with all the

³⁶ Harrison, *Ego*, 44-45; Storr, *Selfie*, 128-129.

³⁷ Storr, *Selfie*, 131-148, 183-227.

³⁸ Storr, *Selfie*, 7-19, 128-132, 153-155, 251-263, 293-296.

³⁹ Storr, *Selfie*, 313.

⁴⁰ Storr, *Selfie*, 329.

⁴¹ Storr, *Selfie*, 132, 141, 169.

⁴² Harrison, *Ego*, 47-49.

⁴³ Harrison, *Ego*, 54-57.

⁴⁴ Marsh, *Liberal*, 50.

⁴⁵ Tom Schulman, *Dead Poets Society*, DVD. Directed by Peter Weir.

⁴⁶ Willy Russell, *Shirley Valentine*, DVD. Directed by Lewis Gilbert.

⁴⁷ Alan Ball, *American Beauty*, DVD. Directed by Sam Mendes.

trappings of a conventional wedding, “pledging to be true and faithful lovers of themselves, as long as they alone shall live.”⁴⁸

The narcissistic “me-culture” is born, energised by consumerism and the media. The *L’Oréal* catchphrase, “because you are worth it”, has penetrated the popular psyche. Storr declares, “We have a word for people who have become drunk on their own hollow self-esteem boosting. It is narcissist.”⁴⁹ Marsh concurs, “The liberal stress on the rights of the individual and self-fulfilment has not led to utopia, but to greater self-absorbed narcissism.”⁵⁰ Frances Ward laments “the narcissism that takes hold, where people come to perceive the world through the prism of their own self-absorption. Such people are haunted by anxiety and are forever seeking attention, affirmation or adulation.”⁵¹ Pete Ward sees this as a problem endemic in celebrity culture; the celebrity, transfixed by his or her own image, typically exhibits the characteristics of the narcissist.⁵² “In celebrity culture, image is power.”⁵³ Western culture is fascinated by celebrity; tabloid newspapers and magazines are filled with the intimate details of celebrity lives. The cult of celebrity characterises the intermingling of the sacred and the profane; celebrities function as “myth bearers”, as Ward explains: “In a world that has been disenchanted through the rationalism and secularization of the Enlightenment, celebrities reoccupy the places that have been left by deities”.⁵⁴ It is a symbiotic relationship in which “[c]elebrity images gaze at us from the media, and we in turn gaze at the celebrities who are intent on gazing at themselves.”⁵⁵ Celebrity figures carry a symbolic significance; they function as a source for identity and self-construction.⁵⁶

The American historian Christopher Lasch, cautions against the term narcissism being too loosely applied, as a synonym for selfishness. Its clinical understanding must be kept in view. However, he believes that the character traits associated with pathological narcissism, in less extreme form, do appear in profusion in everyday life: “dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a

⁴⁸ Will Pavla and Lucy Bannerman, “Solo Brides putting the ‘I’ into Aisle,” *The Times*, September 30, 2017.

⁴⁹ Storr, *Selfie*, 226.

⁵⁰ Marsh, *Liberal*, 54.

⁵¹ Frances Ward, *Rousseau*, 56.

⁵² Pete Ward, *Gods Behaving Badly*, 91.

⁵³ Pete Ward, *Gods*, 89.

⁵⁴ Pete Ward, *Gods*, 97.

⁵⁵ Pete Ward, *Gods*, 91.

⁵⁶ Pete Ward, *Gods*, 27,38.

sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings.”⁵⁷ The renowned psychiatrist Alexander Lowen agrees that narcissism is both a psychological and a cultural condition. It is a particular problem in an age that imposes few restraints on behaviour yet minimizes the importance of feeling, for instance, emphasising sex without love.⁵⁸ He explains, “narcissism denotes a degree of unreality in the individual and in the culture... places the achievement of success above the need to love and to be loved.”⁵⁹ When success outweighs self-respect, a culture overvalues “image” and must be deemed narcissistic.⁶⁰ This is endorsed by the assessment of another eminent psychiatrist, James Masterson:

There are elements in society, similar to the traits in the narcissistic self, that have gone beyond healthy individualism to pathologic self-centeredness, which results in an erosion of realistic, adaptive social standards in favour of exclusive, obsessive self-gratification. This inevitably leads to inner emptiness, isolation, and loneliness even if the individual does not have a narcissistic personality disorder.⁶¹

Narcissism becomes a way of handling the tensions and anxieties of modern life. The prevailing social conditions encourage the narcissistic traits present, in varying degrees, in everyone.⁶² Elliott identifies a narcissistic preoccupation with appearance and image, as another of his core contours of postmodern selfhood: “The postmodern self, created upon fleeting narcissistic images, is a transient identity with precious little in the way of deeper affective ties or emotional roots.”⁶³ This is evidenced in the rise of the “selfie”, the mass obsession people have in taking pictures of themselves and posting them on social media sites. Richard Graham, who launched the UK’s first technology addiction clinic, described the selfie as a “plea not to be forgotten”. He suspects the underlying feeling is one of panic, given the billions of people on Facebook, “The subjective feeling is one of feeling smaller, anonymised, like a grain of sand on a beach.”⁶⁴

The clinical psychologist become journalist Oliver James identifies the prevalence of the “Marketing Character”, a term borrowed from Erich Fromm.⁶⁵ Marketing characters display the narcissistic mindset, concerned about the opinions of others, utilitarian in

⁵⁷ Lash, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 31-33.

⁵⁸ Lowen, *Narcissism*, ix, 10.

⁵⁹ Lowen, *Narcissism*, xi.

⁶⁰ Lowen, *Narcissism*, ix.

⁶¹ Masterson, *The Search for the Real Self*, 106.

⁶² Lash, *Narcissism*, 50.

⁶³ Elliott, *Self*, 145-146.

⁶⁴ Anna Maxted, “Smartphones and Selfie Culture,” *The Times: Body & Soul*, May 2, 2015.

⁶⁵ James, *Affluenza*, 65.

their relationships, obsessed by wealth, possessions and status. “Marketing Characters experience themselves as commodities whose value and meaning are externally determined.... People differentiate one another by what they own, not who they are, by Having rather than Being.”⁶⁶ As Frances Ward observes, in our selfish-capitalist society people are classified as consumers, prey for a cynical market, producing numerous remedies “to stroke the narcissism of a secular soul obsessed by its right to self-expression, self-realisation and ‘authenticity’.”⁶⁷

It would appear that this culture of narcissism is inescapable but there is a more recent movement afoot, noted by Elliott, which rejects our culture’s narcissistic over-estimation of the self and identity. However, it goes to the opposite extreme; with “anti-self theory” the self is made redundant altogether. The self as privileged actor is replaced by the conceptual recognition that the self is just one “actant” in a network of actors, human or otherwise.⁶⁸ It begs the question whether there is a middle way for the self, which avoids the polarities of self-importance and anti-selfhood. This will be addressed. Another area explored by Elliott, that we do not have time to consider, is the impact of sexuality and gender upon self-identity.⁶⁹

In this portrait of the solipsism of the contemporary self, we have already encountered some critics both from within the culture and in the world of academia. In response, various psychologists, sociologists and philosophers seek to reclaim a relational/communal understanding of the self, drawing upon their respective disciplines.⁷⁰ We will recover a relational understanding in chapter four with a starting premise derived from an ontology of the Trinity. Maritain, for one, recognises an essential identification with the “society of the Divine Persons”⁷¹ but does not develop the Trinitarian analogy at any length. Maritain is rightly critical of the materialistic conceptions of society, which disregard the “human *person*” and replace it with the “*material individual*”.⁷² Schrag argues that we need a decentering of the ego as part of the continuing project of deconstructing the Cartesian doctrine of a sovereign subject. “The otherness of the other needs to be granted its intrinsic integrity, so that in seeing the face of the other and

⁶⁶ James, *Affluenza*, 65.

⁶⁷ Frances Ward, *Rousseau*, 74.

⁶⁸ Elliott, *Self*, 191-193.

⁶⁹ See Elliott, *Self*, Ch 4.

⁷⁰ See Balwick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*; Maritain, *Person*; Schrag, *The Self after Postmodernity*.

⁷¹ Maritain, *Person*, 57, 87-89.

⁷² Maritain, *Person*, 91-103. Italics original.

hearing the voice of the other I am *responding* to an exterior gaze and an exterior voice rather than carrying on a conversation with my alter ego.”⁷³

The dominance of the ego has been a concern in popular psycho/spiritual wisdom in recent decades. Within this context, we now consider two “self-denial” approaches - the teachings of the Franciscan friar, Roman Catholic priest and mystic, Richard Rohr, and the personality tool, the Enneagram - and whether they offer satisfactory popular remedies. Rohr wages a war against the ego in defence of the “True Self”, defined as “who you objectively are from the beginning, in the mind and heart of God... your absolute identity”.⁷⁴ It “is that part of you that knows who you are and whose you are, although largely unconsciously.”⁷⁵ Rohr generally uses the terms “soul” and “True Self” interchangeably but he adds the qualification that “the True Self is probably larger than the soul, because *it includes Spirit and embodiment too*.”⁷⁶ The problem is that we are unacquainted with our real selves. Religion is tasked with unearthing the true self.⁷⁷

You (and every other created thing) begins with a divine DNA, an inner destiny as it were, an absolute core that knows the truth about you, a blueprint tucked away in the cellar of your being, an *imago Dei* that begs to be allowed, to be fulfilled, and to show itself....Your True Self is what makes you, you.⁷⁸

The ego presents a major obstacle to the discovery of the true self and the transcendence that we are made for. Under the reign of “individualism and egocentricity... we invariably go to our ego (small self, the False Self) because that is all we know about.” Thus, Rohr equates the ego with the “False Self”.⁷⁹ Rohr articulates a Jungian understanding of the concepts of *persona* and shadow, without mentioning the father of modern psychology.⁸⁰ However, elsewhere, his use of the psychological notions ego and *persona* is confused. They appear the same in his understanding: “Your false self is your role, title, and personal image that is largely a creation of your own mind and attachments.”⁸¹ We have taken the false self as our “absolute identity” when it is merely a “relative identity” that needs to be surrendered.⁸² The “defended and defensive” ego hates changing itself. The ego is blind. It is “*the unobserved self*, because once you see

⁷³ Schrag, *Self*, 84.

⁷⁴ Rohr, *Falling Upward*, 86.

⁷⁵ Rohr, *Immortal Diamond*, viii.

⁷⁶ Rohr, *Immortal*, 4, 16-17. Italics original as in subsequent quotations.

⁷⁷ Rohr, *Falling*, 97-98.

⁷⁸ Rohr, *Immortal*, 17.

⁷⁹ Rohr, *Immortal*, viii, 2, 4.

⁸⁰ Rohr, *Falling*, 127-128.

⁸¹ Rohr, *Falling*, 85.

⁸² Rohr, *Falling*, 86.

it, the game is over.”⁸³ Exposing the motives of the true and false selves, “The ego always has an opportunistic agenda. The soul has no agenda whatsoever except to see what is – *as it is* - and let it teach you.”⁸⁴ Rohr concedes that the false self is “bogus more than bad”.⁸⁵ The false self over-defines itself as unique, special and superior.⁸⁶ It is a master of deception. Only the false self can sin, telling lies “because it somehow *is* a lie.”⁸⁷ Rohr then makes the questionable claim: “The True Self is conscious, the False Self is largely unconscious, and you do evil only when you are unconscious.”⁸⁸ As we will see, this does not cohere with the Freudian or Jungian models of the Self. Furthermore, it appears to negate human responsibility for our actions, ignoring the doctrine of original sin.

Despite his indictment of the ego, Rohr acknowledges that in the first half of life we need boundaries, a sense of identity and order for our lives: “You have to first have an ego structure to then let go of it and move beyond it.”⁸⁹ If we were mirrored well early in life, we should have no further need to protect or assert our identity. However, staying in the protected first half of life beyond its natural period produces a well-disguised narcissist.⁹⁰ The remedy is the Christ-like path of surrendering ego controls: “Only love and suffering are strong enough to break down our usual ego defences, crush our dual thinking, and open us up to Mystery.”⁹¹ In the second half of life we must learn to hear and obey the deeper voice of God, of our deepest self, opposed to the superego; to move from an “ego-centric” to a “soul-centric” worldview.⁹² Defeating the ego/superego “will feel like a... loss of self. *But it is only the death of the false self...* Instead of being ego driven, you will begin to be soul drawn.”⁹³ Rohr interprets Jesus’ words in Matthew 16:25-16 as losing the false self, which “*must die in exact correlation to how much you want the Real.*”⁹⁴ Authentic God experience “consoles our True Self only after it has devastated our false self.”⁹⁵ The spiritual life demands change and growth.

⁸³ Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 90, 94.

⁸⁴ Rohr, *Immortal*, 16.

⁸⁵ Rohr, *Immortal*, 27.

⁸⁶ Rohr, *Immortal*, 49.

⁸⁷ Rohr, *Immortal*, 51.

⁸⁸ Rohr, *Immortal*, 51.

⁸⁹ Rohr, *Falling*, 1,4-5.

⁹⁰ Rohr, *Falling*, 5,26.

⁹¹ Rohr, *Naked*, 122-123.

⁹² Rohr, *Falling*, 43,47-48.

⁹³ Rohr, *Falling*, 50.

⁹⁴ Rohr, *Falling*, 85.

⁹⁵ Rohr, *Falling*, 13.

For Rohr, renunciation of the false self does not require ascetic practices as these have “too much social and ego payoff”.⁹⁶ When we live in the abundance of a universal love, “we do not need to fight or defeat our False Self. It naturally fades into the background”.⁹⁷ The true self “is not the perfect self. It merely participates in the One who is.”⁹⁸ When we find God in ourselves, “*we also find ourselves inside God*”. It is a full homecoming.⁹⁹ Rohr parallels Jung in his assertions: “*The two encounters with a True God and a True Self are largely experienced simultaneously and grow in parallel fashion.*”¹⁰⁰ Likewise, “*self-knowledge and God knowledge will be experienced as the same knowing*”.¹⁰¹ Rohr balances divine immanence with transcendence: “in finding your True Self, you will have found *an absolute reference point that is both utterly within you and utterly beyond you*”.¹⁰² True spirituality is “a search for divine union *now*”.¹⁰³ Coining metaphors from Eckhart, which he fails to attribute, Rohr extols an underlying experience of God as “both *abyss and ground*”,¹⁰⁴ granting that most never get “to the birth of God in the soul.”¹⁰⁵

Rohr condemns the Western “dualistic mind” in favour of the non-dual thinking of the contemplatives.¹⁰⁶ However, elsewhere his reasoning adopts a dualistic, Platonic ring: “Your True Self is that part of you that is going to live forever and sees truthfully. It is divine breath passing through you. Your False Self is that part of you that is constantly changing and will eventually die anyway. It is in the world of passing *forms* and looks out with itself as the central reference point – which is never true.”¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, Rohr loses sight of the essential distinction between Creator and created: “The True Self is neither God nor human. *The True Self is both at the same time*”.¹⁰⁸ This is why Jesus came, “to tell us that our actual form is human-divine, just as he is.”¹⁰⁹ He cites the Vedas, the Hindu scriptures, to validate his argument: “the True Self, in its original, pure, primordial state, is wholly or partially identifiable or even identical with God, the

⁹⁶ Rohr, *Immortal*, 41.

⁹⁷ Rohr, *Immortal*, 55.

⁹⁸ Rohr, *Immortal*, 52.

⁹⁹ Rohr, *Falling*, 91.

¹⁰⁰ Rohr, *Immortal*, 14.

¹⁰¹ Rohr, *Immortal*, 93.

¹⁰² Rohr, *Immortal*, 5.

¹⁰³ Rohr, *Naked*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Rohr, *Naked*, 22.

¹⁰⁵ Rohr, *Falling*, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Rohr, *Naked*, 33-38.

¹⁰⁷ Rohr, *Immortal*, 63.

¹⁰⁸ Rohr, *Immortal*, xiv.

¹⁰⁹ Rohr, *Immortal*, 120.

Ultimate Reality that is the ground and origin of all phenomena.”¹¹⁰ Rohr’s theory of divinization seems to venture beyond *theosis*, participation in the divine nature.

Rohr makes a heroic case for the true self, in keeping with some Christian mystics. He commends contemplation as a means of shifting from the “judging and separate self”, overcoming fear and isolation.¹¹¹ However, his thinking is inconsistent, muddling psychological concepts and dicing with Christian orthodoxy. He fails to reference the recognisable psychological and spiritual sources behind his statements. Above all, he does an injustice to the ego, discrediting it but then admitting it has a role to play, if only in the first half of life. To sever off the ego after it has allegedly served its purpose is psychologically perilous, as we shall see.

We turn now to another flip side of the culture of affirmation, a personality theory which makes similar inferences about the ego, and of which Richard Rohr is a major proponent. “Enneagram” comes from the Greek *ennea*, “nine”, plus *grammos*, “figure”. It is represented by a geometric figure, a nine pointed star within a circle, mapping out the nine fundamental personality types and their complex interrelationships.¹¹² The Enneagram is a psycho-spiritual personality theory, which stems from the Humanistic school of psychology, emphasising the innate goodness and worth of a person.¹¹³ Its actual origins are more ancient and ambiguous. Legend has it going all the way back to the Ancient Near East¹¹⁴ before resurfacing as part of Sufi mysticism.¹¹⁵ It also has roots in Christian mysticism, in the writings of the fourth century Desert Father, Evagrius, who developed a psychology of character based on eight evil “thoughts” or passions.¹¹⁶ The Enneagram was first conveyed to the West by George Ivanovich Gurdjieff in 1916, a “Pythagorean Greek” and an “esoteric Christian”.¹¹⁷ It was further developed by Oscar Ichazo in the early 1970s and then Claudio Naranjo, a Chilean psychiatrist, united this mystical path of transformation with an intellectual Western psychological model.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Rohr, *Immortal*, 99.

¹¹¹ Rohr, *Naked*, 53,124.

¹¹² Riso and Hudson, *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*, 9.

¹¹³ Innes, *Personality Indicators and the Spiritual Life*, 8.

¹¹⁴ Rohr and Ebert, *The Enneagram*, 7.

¹¹⁵ Palmer, *The Enneagram*, 10.

¹¹⁶ Rohr and Ebert, *Enneagram*, 8-10,13-14.

¹¹⁷ Rohr and Ebert, *Enneagram*, 6,18,20.

¹¹⁸ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 46,51.

The fundamental philosophy, according to Helen Palmer, is that we each possess an essential nature that is qualitatively different from our acquired personality. “Essence” is the potentials with which we were born, rather than what we have gained through life, our education, or our beliefs. “In essence we are like young children: there is no conflict between our thoughts, or our emotions, or our instincts. We act correctly and without hesitation to maintain well-being, stemming from an undefended trust in the environment and in other people.”¹¹⁹ Parents of small children may rightly contend such a claim about children’s being free from inner conflicts and having impeccable instinctual behaviour. Ego, in this regard, is an acquired false personality, not our true self or “essence”.¹²⁰ Essence is a return to innocence. Personality development is synonymous with survival in a hostile world, caught up with the formation of ego boundaries and defence mechanisms: “personality develops in order to protect and defend essence from injury in the material world.”¹²¹ In the Enneagram system, the whole edifice of our personality is constellated around our primary defence mechanism. It is a negative starting point. The Enneagram identifies nine “Chief Features”, or “Passions”, of the emotional life, neurotic habits that develop during childhood.¹²² They correspond to the seven deadly sins with the addition of deceit and fear. By contrast, the higher capacities (virtues) are “the lost qualities of essence, each one of which represents the successful resolution of a painful neurotic trend.”¹²³ The nine passions give rise to the different personality types: The Perfectionist, The Giver, The Performer, The Romantic, The Observer, The Loyal Sceptic, The Epicure, The Protector and The Mediator.¹²⁴

The Enneagram is a dynamic system. Each type is granted freedom of movement between the points. All of us have the potential of all nine types.¹²⁵ Each type is influenced by its “Wings” on either side on the circle, which make the personality more unique. The Enneagram recognises three physical centres in the body: head, heart and gut; different ways of experiencing the world. One of these predominates for each type. Eight, nine and one are gut based types; they tend to “be” in the world through action. Two, three and four are heart based; they operate through relationship, concerned with

¹¹⁹ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 17-18.

¹²⁰ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 17.

¹²¹ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 19-21.

¹²² Palmer, *Enneagram*, 24-25.

¹²³ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 46.

¹²⁴ For descriptions see Daniels and Price, *The Essential Enneagram*; Palmer, *Enneagram*; Rohr and Ebert, *Enneagram*.

¹²⁵ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 7.

how others see and relate to them. Five, six and seven are head based, inclined to respond to life through their thoughts.¹²⁶ Helen Palmer states two reasons to discover one's own type. Firstly, to build a working relationship with yourself and discover what makes you thrive, rather than playing out neurotic trends. Secondly, to understand other people on their own terms, rather than as you see them.¹²⁷

In order to live a psychologically mature life, the blind spots and unconscious defence mechanisms within our character structure, that cause us to see reality in a distorted way, must be unmasked: "by naming our own Chief Feature we can learn to observe the many ways in which this habit has gained control of our lives."¹²⁸ Conversely, "The search for a particular aspect of essence is motivated by the fact that you suffer from its absence."¹²⁹ According to Rohr and Ebert, the mystical image of the human being adopted by Enneagram teaching sees the construction of the "empirical ego" in the first half of life as "the sum of our attitudes and behavioral mechanisms". The hardening of ego boundaries leads to fixation upon and identification with the false self.¹³⁰ Rohr endorses the Enneagram as an indispensable instrument for the second half of life to free people from their self-image; he regards it as a necessary process of redemption.¹³¹

Many people find this popular tool an enlightening explanation of their own and others' personalities. However, the Enneagram should not be swallowed uncritically. Whilst it positively promotes self-understanding, it does so from a flawed foundation. It is correct in its judgement that we need to be redeemed/transformed but the issue at stake is how. From a Christian perspective, the doctrine of essence makes a god of human nature. It is not just what happens to us in life that corrupts, but our innate sinful inclinations. According to the doctrine of original sin, human beings are naturally self-centred. As Paul bemoans, "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." (Romans 7:19) The natural instincts of the ego incline towards sin. Furthermore, Palmer's commentary on the Passions, "These emotional habits developed during the fall from grace into the material world",¹³² exposes her Gnosticism. From a psychological perspective, Freud's drive-conflict/ego-defence psychology is central to

¹²⁶ Webb, *The Enneagram*, 8-9.

¹²⁷ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 9.

¹²⁸ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 17,25.

¹²⁹ Palmer, *Enneagram*, 18 .

¹³⁰ Rohr and Ebert, *Enneagram*, xii-xiii,26.

¹³¹ Rohr and Ebert, *Enneagram*, 26-27,247.

¹³² Palmer, *Enneagram*, 24.

the Enneagram and yet the latter ignores another primary aspect of Freud's ego psychology, the instinctual forces, which left unchecked would destroy us. It does not fit into a psychological framework of self-affirmation, falling firmly within the ego-denial camp of popular culture. To vilify the ego and perceive personality as false, constellated around our passions/defence mechanisms, fails to acknowledge the good or potential in the human psyche. The reality of the self is more complex. A realistic assessment is needed that recognises both strengths and weaknesses. A more grounded and rounded personality theory, Myers-Briggs, will be presented in chapter five.

A dichotomy between self-affirming and self-denying tendencies in our culture has been illustrated with examples of bad self-affirmation and bad self-denial. Rohr rightly calls for a reawakening to the divine and mystical core to our being. However, his belief system, including the Enneagram, presents problems when weighed in the balance of modern psychology and Christian theology. It remains now to venture behind the scenes for an exploration of the disciplines of psychology, spirituality and theology, in order, finally, to impart more commendable popular psychological and spiritual tools. In the next chapter, the insights of modern psychology, notably of Freud and Jung, broaden an understanding of the self and self-affirmation. The more popular concept of emotional intelligence is reviewed as a benchmark of self-authenticity. In chapter three, the quest for the true self is taken up by the mystics, who believe this is altogether different from the ego. We will delve into understandings of self-denial, which are more nuanced than may at first be assumed. Chapter four explores a theological anthropology through the doctrines of *imago Dei*, Christological *kenosis* and the Trinity, to arrive at an understanding of personhood and a resolution to the self-denial/affirmation debate. In the final chapter, we revisit Jesus' discipleship challenge, consider the implications for Christian discipleship and identify ways in which the ego may be formed to be less self-centred. Both psychological and spiritual insights are pertinent in this regard. Rediscovering bona fide routines of prayer and self-examination draws us into the experience of union, beyond the superficial. It is in contemplating Christ that we find out what is counterfeit.

Chapter 2

On the Analyst's Couch

Psychological insights into the Significance of the Self

Introduction

We have witnessed the negative effects of the unbridled ego and reactions which would render the ego redundant. However, the ego is not to be dispensed with yet. This chapter presents the case for a healthy ego. In turning to the discipline of psychology for a more clinical assessment of the nature of the ego, we discover that the ego is a component within a much bigger picture of the human psyche. The ego is but part of the self. Concepts of the self have existed since ancient times, but in the world of psychology it begins with the models of the psyche formulated by Freud and Jung who, contrary to humanistic psychology, recognised the inherent flaws in human nature. Clearly, the works of Freud and Jung are not the full picture of psychological theory today and no attempt is made to reconcile their ideas with cognitive neuroscience, but these founding fathers of modern psychology remain influential and are fundamental to our agenda. Accordingly, this is a selective, not a comprehensive overview of their works. We will also see how their insights are applied in more contemporary thinking in the field of psychology on ego dysfunction, as we explore the inauthentic self and the problems that arise due to our cultural and psychological inheritance. Richard Rohr is right in this judgement: “Western individualism has really done us in. It has created either ego-inflated or ego-deflated people or, more commonly, a daily seesaw between both – yet both of them are illusions.”¹³³

Authenticity, being real, is at stake. We will consider how the ego can be real or unreal. This will include revisiting the narcissistic personality disorder encountered in the last chapter from more clinical perspective. Lastly, we will take a look at what constitutes the authentic self and the notion of emotional intelligence, which has been popularised as a gage of authenticity and emotional health. The benefits for church life will be highlighted in chapter five. Essentially, psychology is in the business of affirming the self but not in the superficial or solipsistic sense encountered in contemporary Western society. There is some soul searching to be done in cultivating the authentic self. It is a

¹³³ Rohr, *Immortal Diamond*, 183-184.

more complex picture than popular polarised apprehensions of self-affirmation/denial, which tend to revolve around the ego.

Laying the Foundations: The Fathers of Modern Psychology

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Freud used the word *ich*, “self”, which he called the “soul”, in two senses: as the whole person and as the ego. Freudians concentrated upon the latter, the self as an agency of the mind, operating on a set of mechanical principles.¹³⁴ Freud began to develop his “ego psychology”, theories about the whole personality, from the First World War onwards. His structure of the mind (psyche) evolved over time from his psychoanalysis of numerous patients. Keen as he was to take a “scientific” approach, the divisions of the mind proposed were not actual physical divisions but a theoretical model to understand the nature of the psyche.¹³⁵ Freud eventually arrived at three states of consciousness: conscious, unconscious and preconscious.¹³⁶ The conscious mind is the part that is aware of thoughts and actions, where all conscious thought processes occur.¹³⁷ The unconscious lies outside the boundaries of consciousness. It contains repressed thoughts and forgotten memories. Primitive instinctive urges are pushed down into the unconscious in order for society to function effectively. Freud saw the content of the unconscious as primarily sexual in nature. Material in the unconscious cannot be accessed directly but through free association (the patient says whatever comes into their head), *parapraxes* (slips of the tongue or action, “Freudian slips”) and dreams: the “royal road to the unconscious.”¹³⁸ The preconscious is the latent region of the mind between the conscious and the unconscious, where information is stored that is not presently conscious, but is capable of becoming conscious.¹³⁹

Freud developed this further when he published a revolutionary and dynamic new model of the mind, which attempts to describe the workings of the whole mind as a system and its main drives.¹⁴⁰ The psyche is comprised of three main parts, originally termed “the it”, “the I” and “the above-I”:¹⁴¹ The *id* (Latin for “it”) is the unconscious

¹³⁴ Masterson, *The Search for the Real Self*, 21-22.

¹³⁵ Freud, *The Unconscious*, 57.

¹³⁶ Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 4-5.

¹³⁷ Freud, *Unconscious*, 4.

¹³⁸ Freud, *Unconscious*, 50-51; Kline, *Psychology and Freudian Theory*, 6,15.

¹³⁹ Freud, *Ego*, 4-5; Freud, *Unconscious*, 56.

¹⁴⁰ Freud, *Ego*, Editor’s introduction, ix-xi.

¹⁴¹ Masterson, *Real Self*, 21.

part of the mind. At birth all mental processes and energy are *id*. It consists of inherited, primitive, instinctual impulses, described by Freud as a “seething cauldron of excitement”.¹⁴² Its only reality is its own selfish needs and it seeks instant gratification. It is completely amoral. The *id* has no concept of time, so impressions and urges from the past affect the person as if happening in the present.¹⁴³ Granted unrestrained expression, the *id* would destroy self and civilization. The ego (Latin for “I”) is where consciousness comes from, although Freud concedes that much of the ego is unconscious.¹⁴⁴ It is the part of the mind which a person regards as the “self”, without perhaps realising there is more. It reacts to external reality and can also observe itself. The ego is rational and involved in decision making; “a coherent organization of mental processes”.¹⁴⁵ The main function of the ego is to tell us what is real. As the child develops, the ego differentiates from the *id* and restrains the *id*’s urges in accord with reality. Freud compared the ego and the *id* with a rider and his horse: the horse has the strength and the rider guides it where he wants to go.¹⁴⁶ The super-ego (ego-ideal) is the “inner parent” authority which responds to social rules, the set of norms internalised as a child. The super-ego is formed at the time of the Oedipus and castration complexes. It acts as a conscience, exercising moral censorship, judging our behaviour and demanding perfection of the ego. The tension between the two is experienced as guilt.¹⁴⁷ Kline notes that the ego is concerned with reason and the super-ego with feelings.¹⁴⁸ The super-ego is also largely unconscious.¹⁴⁹

Freud did not see these three aspects of the psyche as having rigid boundaries but merging into one another.¹⁵⁰ In a reasonably mature, mentally healthy adult, the *id*, ego and super-ego will act in a balanced way.¹⁵¹ The ego is at the frontier, having to manage the *id*, the superego and the external world. Freud pities it, “a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the *id*, and from the severity of the super-ego.”¹⁵² Freud identified two opposing mental processes that control normal human behaviour: the

¹⁴² Kline, *Psychology*, 16.

¹⁴³ Snowden, *Freud*, 126-127.

¹⁴⁴ Freud, *Ego*, xii,13; Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in *Collected Works*, 192.

¹⁴⁵ Freud, *Ego*, 7.

¹⁴⁶ Freud, *Ego*, 15; Freud, *Unconscious*, 90-91.

¹⁴⁷ Freud, *Ego*, 24-27.

¹⁴⁸ Kline, *Psychology*, 18.

¹⁴⁹ Freud, *Ego*, 38-39.

¹⁵⁰ Freud, *Ego*, 14.

¹⁵¹ Snowden, *Freud*, 125,130.

¹⁵² Freud, *Ego*, 46.

primary process, governed by the pleasure principle and wish fulfilment, the main motivational force of the unconscious/*id*, for the gratification of basic desires/sexual urges, versus the secondary process, the reality principle, involving conscious, logical thought, the domain of the ego, enabling us to delay gratification in order to get on with everyday life.¹⁵³ In sum,

The ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the *id* and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the *id*. For the ego, perception plays the part which in the *id* falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the *id*, which contains the passions.¹⁵⁴

Freud believed the sex drive (libido), the instinct energy contained in the *id*, was the driving force behind most behaviour; he thought it so strong that it constantly threatened to force its way up to the surface. However, his later writing suggested that there were also a large number of other drives in the psyche which can be grouped into two classes of instinct: *Eros*, the life instinct, concerned with self-preservation and enjoyment and *Thanatos*, the death instinct, which is destructive.¹⁵⁵ Kline describes Freud's topological description of the mind and psychosexual theory as a "closed energy model"; if the energy seeking release is prevented from expression it will emerge later or in a changed form.¹⁵⁶ Pine notes that the psychology of ego function took its main thrust from drive-conflict psychology and remains tied to it through the conception of ego defence against drive.¹⁵⁷

Freud, and his daughter Anna, identified a range of unconscious defence mechanisms employed by the ego to control the *id* and protect the ego, "the actual seat of anxiety",¹⁵⁸ from undesirable feelings.¹⁵⁹ One of the most common is repression, a way of forgetting. Undesirable or threatening material is pushed back into the unconscious and locked away.¹⁶⁰ Displacement arises as a result of repression. When someone cannot release a basic feeling it builds up and is subsequently directed onto a substitute target, for instance, anger at the boss directed at a spouse.¹⁶¹ Denial is an overt and usually

¹⁵³ Freud, *Unconscious*, 3-9.

¹⁵⁴ Freud, *Ego*, 15.

¹⁵⁵ Freud, *Ego*, 30-37; Snowden, *Freud*, 73,76.

¹⁵⁶ Kline, *Psychology*, 20.

¹⁵⁷ Pine, *Drive, Ego, Object and Self*, 34.

¹⁵⁸ Freud, *Ego*, 47.

¹⁵⁹ Freud, *Unconscious*, 14-31.

¹⁶⁰ Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 335-337; Freud, *Unconscious*, 35-45.

¹⁶¹ Freud, *Unconscious*, 42-44,69.

emotive denial of the unconscious impulse. The person refuses to accept the reality of the situation.¹⁶² Reaction-Formation is similar to denial but entails feeling and acting in the opposite way to the impulse in order to cover it up, for example, the homosexual who is homophobic.¹⁶³ Projection is almost a combination of denial and displacement. The person is unable to recognise the reality of their own feelings or behaviour, so unacceptable traits are projected onto others leaving the person untarnished.¹⁶⁴ Conversely, introjection (identification) involves absorbing someone else's personality characteristics into your own to compensate for an emotional shortfall. This is the mechanism by which the super-ego develops.¹⁶⁵ Rationalisation entails finding apparently good reasons for actions that are more acceptable to the ego than the real reason.¹⁶⁶ More positively, sublimation involves transforming unacceptable impulses into socially acceptable forms leading to art and civilization.¹⁶⁷ When feelings are isolated from their cause isolation (intellectualisation) occurs. A threatening memory or impulse becomes of no consequence, common during an emergency or sometimes following childhood abuse.¹⁶⁸ Finally, when someone reverts back to an earlier developmental stage that feels safe or comforting it is termed regression.¹⁶⁹ We are prone to this when we feel ill or upset or need to let off steam.¹⁷⁰

According to Freud, these unconscious defence mechanisms help to determine beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behaviour. He went so far as to argue that all character traits are defences against instinctual impulses.¹⁷¹ Kline observes: "Generally the more emotional the statement, the less likely it is that it is a natural, conscious ego product but is, rather, one fuelled by defences."¹⁷² With so much to cope with in life we cannot survive without defence mechanisms. Problems arise when they are relied upon too heavily and people can no longer distinguish fact from fantasy; they mask issues that need to be resolved.¹⁷³ Highlighting the two extremes, neurotics defend too much and will not give expression to their instinctual drives, characterized by a strong super-ego and a weak

¹⁶² Kline, *Psychology*, 23.

¹⁶³ Freud, *Unconscious*, 44,67; Kline, *Psychology*, 23-24.

¹⁶⁴ Freud, *Unconscious*, 66-67.

¹⁶⁵ Snowden, *Freud*, 136.

¹⁶⁶ Freud, *Unconscious*, 65.

¹⁶⁷ Kline, *Psychology*, 20.

¹⁶⁸ Kline, *Psychology*, 25; Snowden, *Freud*, 138-139.

¹⁶⁹ Freud, *Unconscious*, 43-44,70,105.

¹⁷⁰ Snowden, *Freud*, 138.

¹⁷¹ Kline, *Psychology*, 26.

¹⁷² Kline, *Psychology*, 24.

¹⁷³ Snowden, *Freud*, 132,139.

ego. On the other hand, the defences of psychotics have broken down and they are overwhelmed by the *id*; they have lost contact with reality.¹⁷⁴ Psychoanalysis serves to explore the secret inner world, uncover the resistances, and bring repressed material into consciousness.¹⁷⁵ It aims to “restore harmony between *id*, *ego* and *superego*.”¹⁷⁶ The intention is to strengthen the *ego* and make it more independent of the *super-ego*, so that it can gain more ground over the *id*.¹⁷⁷ As Freud explains, “The *ego* develops from perceiving instincts to controlling them, from obeying instincts to inhibiting them.”¹⁷⁸ The *ego* plays a vital role in human functioning. Self-control is a necessary virtue in civilised society. Western individualism must be kept in check.

From a Freudian perspective, then, it is the *id*, rather than the *ego*, which is thoroughly selfish. The unconscious wields an immense power over our lives. The *ego* attracts sympathy for its efforts to keep the psyche on an even keel. Kline concludes that “Freud’s *Man* is an heroic figure who, struggling against a primary vicious nature, has done surprisingly well.”¹⁷⁹ Upon closer inspection, the *ego* still has self-interest at heart. For Freud, the chief purpose of human life was the pursuit of happiness, the satisfaction of libidinous needs, dominated by the pleasure principle. The *ego* is conflicted when the needs of the individual clash with those of society. Freud saw civilisation as oppressive, with its imposition of rules. The *ego* has to find ways of suppressing and sublimating libidinal urges to conform to the standards of society, which becomes a source of unhappiness and neurotic symptoms. Freud maintained that the solution lay in the supremacy of the intellect. Individuals must gain awareness of their own repressed conflicts and manage their aggressive urges through a process of self-enlightenment.¹⁸⁰ Thus, Freud places incredible faith in the human capacity to self-heal.

As a professed atheist, Freud certainly did not entertain any notion of surrendering the egotistical self to a higher power. Freud took a determinist and positivist stance. He had great confidence in his own sense experience: “these thoughts are linked to various facts of analytic observation”.¹⁸¹ Science meant discovering the natural laws underpinning the world. He was uncovering the laws of human behaviour through unconscious mental

¹⁷⁴ Kline, *Psychology*, 26,33.

¹⁷⁵ Freud, *Lectures*, 489.

¹⁷⁶ Kline, *Psychology*, 33.

¹⁷⁷ Freud, *Lectures*, 490.

¹⁷⁸ Freud, *Ego*, 45-46.

¹⁷⁹ Kline, *Psychology*, 36.

¹⁸⁰ Snowden, *Freud*, 148-149.

¹⁸¹ Freud, *Ego*, 1.

processes, open to observation through free association. The notion of the unconscious was not original to Freud. What was groundbreaking was the importance it assumed in psychoanalysis and Freud's methods for discovering the concept and content of the unconscious from the theory of repression.¹⁸² Even if we do not accept all his conclusions, Freud shines an illuminating spotlight on unconscious processes to which we do well to pay attention. The ego is to be approved, not for self-assertion, but for being an agent of self-management and self-improvement in taming selfish impulses. A successful ego is a mark of maturity. Now we turn to the more expansive thinking of Freud's protégé.

Carl Jung (1875-1961)

Freud became a friend and mentor to Jung. They were allies against opponents of psychoanalysis. However, Jung's independent thinking resulted in an irreparable rift in 1913. Sagaciously, Jung rejected Freud's exclusively sexual interpretation of human motivation and used the term libido to describe general psychic energy or universal life force.¹⁸³ Neither did Jung conform to the scientific rationalism of his day. He believed it diminished the importance of the individual and was responsible for "psychological mass-mindedness".¹⁸⁴ He draws a parallel with the collectivism of Churches, where the "will to individuality is regarded as egotistic obstinacy."¹⁸⁵ In asserting the primacy of the individual, Jung is quick to remind the Churches that the salvation of the world consists in the salvation of individual souls in need of redemption. The real task is helping the individual to achieve "a *metanoia*, or rebirth of the spirit".¹⁸⁶

Jung insisted that the internal world of the psyche is as real as the external world, if not more so: "Psychic reality is held to be the only reality that we experience immediately."¹⁸⁷ When referring to the mind and mental activity, Jung used the terms "psyche" and "psychic" to cover both conscious and unconscious.¹⁸⁸ Jung was comfortable with the broad understanding of psyche as "mind, soul or spirit". His system of analytic psychology was a spiritual psychology.¹⁸⁹ Jung's representation of

¹⁸² Freud, *Ego*, 5; Kline, *Psychology*, 5-7.

¹⁸³ Samuels, ed., *The Father*, 7-12.

¹⁸⁴ Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, 9-10.

¹⁸⁵ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 34.

¹⁸⁶ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 40.

¹⁸⁷ Jung, *Abstracts of the Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, 000201/vol.8, 382-384.

¹⁸⁸ Frieda Fordham, *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology*, 15.

¹⁸⁹ Jung, *Collected Works*, 000199/vol.8, 338-357.

the psyche can be likened to an island: the conscious part is the land seen above the water but by far the greatest portion of land lies unknown beneath the surface.¹⁹⁰

Jung's three psychic levels, the conscious, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious, differ from Freud's.¹⁹¹ The conscious element is the "us" that the world sees and how we perceive ourselves. The ego is the knowing, willing "I" centre of consciousness that gives us our sense of identity. Unlike Freud's understanding of the ego, it does not extend into the unconscious (unless repressed).¹⁹² Jung emphasized the need to develop a strong ego in the first half of life in order to function in the outer world. The ego has to relate to the inner and the outer world. An effective ego organizes and balances the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche, giving it a sense of purpose. An over-inflated ego, however, is potentially dangerous.¹⁹³ Jung did not really distinguish between ego and consciousness, using the two words interchangeably or combining them into the term "ego-consciousness". In Jung's view the conscious mind grows out of the unconscious psyche.¹⁹⁴ What belongs to consciousness is not fully conscious all the time. In order to conduct our lives we suppress information surplus to requirement but it can still be recalled at will.¹⁹⁵

The personal unconscious is a "shadow land stretching between the ego and the unconscious... a land which has not always been covered by the sea, and can be reclaimed".¹⁹⁶ Jung's interpretation of the unconscious is more rounded than Freud's "repository of everything objectionable, everything infantile – even animal – in ourselves".¹⁹⁷ Whilst formed by repressed impulses and forgotten experiences, the unconscious also includes subliminal perceptions that do not reach consciousness.¹⁹⁸ It contains all aspects of human nature, light and dark, the potential for new creativity or catastrophe.¹⁹⁹ The existence of a "second psychic authority besides the ego" must be acknowledged.²⁰⁰ Powerful unconscious factors thwart the ego's intentions.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁰ Frieda Fordham, *Jung's Psychology*, 21.

¹⁹¹ Jung, "The Structure of the Psyche" CW 8, pars.317-321, in *The Essential Jung: Selected Writings*, 67.

¹⁹² Michael Fordham, *Explorations into the Self*, 95.

¹⁹³ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 9-10.

¹⁹⁴ Jung, *Collected Works*, 000199/vol.8, 338-357.

¹⁹⁵ Frieda Fordham, *Jung's Psychology*, 21.

¹⁹⁶ Frieda Fordham, *Jung's Psychology*, 21-22.

¹⁹⁷ Frieda Fordham, *Jung's Psychology*, 21.

¹⁹⁸ Jung, "Structure of the Psyche" CW 8, pars.317-321, 67.

¹⁹⁹ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 75.

²⁰⁰ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 61.

²⁰¹ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 44.

Repression weakens during sleep in dreams and memories return of their own accord.²⁰² Jung came to the opinion that the personal unconscious is comprised of *complexes*, emotionally charged memories, which function as sub-personalities and are personified in dreams. These unconscious personality components are relatively autonomous, leading a life of their own in the psyche, exerting pronounced effects upon our conscious life.²⁰³ Complexes can get out of hand if not given sufficient recognition, responsible for moodiness, embarrassing slips of the tongue, and even split personality.²⁰⁴ Reality can be distorted, perceived through the lens of the complex. Complexes form a bridge between the personal and the collective psyche.

The collective unconscious is a deeper level of the unconscious, common to all humankind, where the brain is shaped by inherited human experience. It is inborn and universal.²⁰⁵ It is objective, and Jung later proposed the term “objective psyche” as a more fitting name for it.²⁰⁶ The existence of the collective unconscious can be deduced by observing behaviour determined by biological instincts. Instinctive actions are inherited and unconscious and occur consistently.²⁰⁷ The collective unconscious is a repository of *archetypes*, “primordial types,... universal images that have existed since the remotest times.”²⁰⁸ Our personal realities are influenced by this deeper archetypal reality, “the two million-year-old Self”.²⁰⁹ Jung writes,

[T]he mythological motifs or mythologems I have designated as archetypes. These are to be understood as specific forms and groups of images which occur not only at all times and in all places but also in individual dreams, fantasies, visions, and delusional ideas. Their frequent appearance in individual case material, as well as their universal distribution, prove that the human psyche is unique and subjective or personal only in part, and for the rest is collective and objective.²¹⁰

The idea of archetypes is ancient and relates to Plato’s ideal forms, the patterns already existing in the divine mind that determine in what form the material world will come into being. The word stems comes from the Greek, where *arche* means “first” and *type* means “imprint” or “pattern”.²¹¹ Jung was the first to coin the concept of psychological

²⁰² Frieda Fordham, *Jung’s Psychology*, 22.

²⁰³ Jung, “A Review of the Complex Theory” CW 8, pars. 200-203, in *Selected Writings*, 38-40.

²⁰⁴ Sanford, *Dreams: God’s Forgotten Language*, 105.

²⁰⁵ Jung, “Structure of the Psyche” CW 8, pars.317-321, 67.

²⁰⁶ Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 22; Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 61.

²⁰⁷ Frieda Fordham, *Jung’s Psychology*, 23.

²⁰⁸ Jung, *Archetypes*, 5.

²⁰⁹ Stevens, *Private Myths*, 4.

²¹⁰ Jung, *Dreams*, 77.

²¹¹ Johnson, *Inner Work*, 27.

archetypes. Through studying people's dreams, Jung discovered that dream symbols sometimes corresponded exactly to images from ancient myths and religious practices of which the individuals had no conscious knowledge. These "primordial images" have become part of the formation of our basic psychological structure. The various archetypal figures that recur in dreams and fantasies carry a "numinous" quality. They have historical parallels and correlate with universal myths, generating similar thoughts, feelings and images in people, regardless of their race, creed, geographical location, or historical epoch.²¹² Archetypes appear in different cultural guises, adapting themselves to our own context, but the archetype itself remains the same. Archetypes are thought to be responsible for guiding the life-cycle of our species. Every individual life is at the same time the eternal life of the species. Archetypes fulfil the biological objectives of survival, adaptation, and growth. They have an energy and goals of their own, which they seek to achieve in the psyche.²¹³ There are an indefinable number of archetypes, including the Wise Old Man and Woman, the Great Mother, the Trickster and the Divine Child. The following are fundamental:²¹⁴

The *persona* is "the archetype of interface between self and other".²¹⁵ It comes from the Latin word meaning "actor's mask". Everyone has a *persona*. It is the recognisable public face or image that we adopt; our exterior self worn to make ourselves presentable to the outside world and conceal our true nature. Without it human society could not function. It is the basic archetype of all human society and culture. As well as individual *personas*, there are collective ones, defined by public civic and religious traditions and official functions.²¹⁶ Some of us have the role of maintaining these public *personae*, which can become inextricably bound up with our own personal *persona*. Dreams involving personal appearance, especially clothing and public occasion, are usually to do with *persona* issues. To be naked in dreams may represent the loss of the *persona*.²¹⁷ Problems arise when people think the *persona* is all there is, or identify with it too closely, mistaking it for the real self/ego.²¹⁸

²¹² Jung, "On the Psychology of the Unconscious" CW 7, pars.106-109, in *Selected Writings*, 70-71.

²¹³ Stevens, *Myths*, 129-131.

²¹⁴ Fontana, *The Secret Language of Dreams*, 36-38.

²¹⁵ Taylor, *Dream Work*, 156.

²¹⁶ Jung, "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious" CW 7, pars.305-309, in *Selected Writings*, 94.

²¹⁷ Fontana, *Dreams*, 36.

²¹⁸ Jung, "Ego and the Unconscious" CW 7, pars.305-309, 95-96.

The shadow is the opposite of the *persona*. Taylor defines the shadow as “the archetype of the threshold between conscious self-awareness and the unconscious.”²¹⁹ It may provide the first doorway into the world of the unconscious. Taylor writes, “Just as our physical bodies cast shadows in sunlight, so our psychological personae create a Shadow – a dark outline in the same shape as the Persona where the light of consciousness does not fall, as a result of our habitual repression.”²²⁰ The shadow is grounded in our primitive, instinctual nature. It is “a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality”. As such, it is usual to deny its existence.²²¹ Jung explains, “The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself”.²²² The more we repress the shadow, the greater the chance of it bursting forth when we are unaware. It is personified in dreams or projected onto others, to dangerous effect.²²³ The appearance of the shadow indicates a need for a more conscious awareness of its existence and to embrace its dark energies. We must learn to own and assimilate it into the conscious personality.²²⁴

Jung believed that we each carry within us the whole of human potential, male and female. The *anima* is the personification of the unconscious feminine principle in a man’s personality and the *animus*, the unconscious masculine qualities in a woman. Jung refers to the *anima* as the “soul”.²²⁵ The *anima* and *animus* serve as soul guides to the vast areas of our unacknowledged inner potential. “If the encounter with the shadow is the ‘apprentice-piece’ in the individual’s development, then that with the anima is the ‘master piece.’”²²⁶ The archetype of the sexual complement builds a bridge between the ego and the collective unconscious, taking us into the realm of the “gods”, a numinous, magical, taboo world.²²⁷ Mythology represents the *anima* as maiden goddesses or women of great beauty and the *animus* as noble gods or heroes. Since the *anima* and *animus* are so numinous, they are charged with psychic energy, so that they have an emotional grip on people. If we allow them to take possession of our unconscious lives, men can become over-emotional, while women may become dominating and stubborn. For a man, the *anima* may feel other than himself and he will unconsciously project it

²¹⁹ Taylor, *Dream Work*, 159.

²²⁰ Taylor, *Dream Work*, 159.

²²¹ Jung, “The Shadow” CW 9 ii, pars.13-19, in *Selected Writings*, 91; Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 59,66.

²²² Jung, *Archetypes*, 284.

²²³ Jung, “The Shadow”, 92; Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 46,67-68.

²²⁴ Jung, “The Shadow”, 91; Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 69-73.

²²⁵ Jung, *Archetypes*, 26-27.

²²⁶ Jung, *Archetypes*, 29.

²²⁷ Jung, *Archetypes*, 28.

on to women.²²⁸ Likewise, women may project their *animus* onto men. The person that carries the projection will greatly attract or repel.²²⁹

The Self is the archetype of archetypes. It is the totality of the psyche: “The self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of consciousness.”²³⁰ Jung’s concept of the Self derives both from Eastern mysticism in the sense that many Oriental formulations refer to totality, and also from Jung’s idea of the *transcendent function* for the reconciliation of opposites.²³¹ The presence of the Self is implicit in dreams and occasionally appears in the form of a numinous symbol. It can be experienced as a profound mystery or even the divine.²³² Characteristic symbols include the lotus, the royal couple (the conjunction of the polarities of masculine and feminine), circular or quadranic forms, especially the mandala,²³³ an archetypal image meaning “All is One”, the Indian Sanskrit term for a circle drawn in religious rituals.²³⁴ Although the centre is represented by an innermost point, it is surrounded by everything that belongs to the Self, the paired opposites that make up the total personality. This centre point is expressed as the entire Self: conscious, personal unconscious and collective unconscious.²³⁵

For Jung, the Self is more than a postulate; it is a thing which exists, hence the denotation by a capital S by some writers, including here, to emphasize its special position in analytical psychology and to differentiate it from the ego, referred to by some as the self.²³⁶ Fordham highlights the contradiction that the Self is both the totality of the psyche and an archetype. As the total psyche, it is expressed by the equation: “self = ego + archetypes”, the combination of conscious and unconscious.²³⁷ As an archetype, the Self is unknowable, being an unconscious function that can only be referred to by symbolic imagery. The concept of the Self as an archetype came second in Jung’s thinking. However, on numerous occasions he combines the two ideas or goes

²²⁸ Jung, *Archetypes*, 27.

²²⁹ Sanford, *The Invisible Partners*, 13.

²³⁰ Jung, *Dreams*, 115.

²³¹ Michael Fordham, *Explorations*, 20,22; Jung, *Psychological Types*, 610.

²³² Stevens, *Myths*, 217-218.

²³³ Johnson, *Inner Work*, 49; Stevens, *Myths*, 217.

²³⁴ Jung, *Archetypes*, 355.

²³⁵ Jung, *Archetypes*, 357.

²³⁶ Michael Fordham, *Explorations*, 22.

²³⁷ Michael Fordham, *Explorations*, 20-21.

from one level of expression to the other.²³⁸ Another ambiguity arises regarding the ego and the Self. The ego is both an entity separate from the Self and a part of the Self, that is, they are interrelated entities. As the centre of consciousness, the ego is subjective, in contrast to the objective archetypes and the Self. Later on, Jung's concept of the ego deepened as he discovered that some of the archetypal forms, notably the shadow, contained ego structures which had been split off and needed re-assimilating. He recognized an unconscious aspect of the ego.²³⁹

The Self is the integrative, transformative, self-regulating centre of our personality that navigates us towards *individuation*, the process “by which every living organism becomes what it was destined to become from the beginning.”²⁴⁰ It entails becoming a separate indivisible unity or whole psychological “in-dividual”. This wholeness of our total being is expressed in the archetype of the Self and the Self is also the principle of integration. Individuation is achieved by integrating the individual archetypes of the collective unconscious. It involves the harmonizing of our conscious and unconscious personality to become complete.²⁴¹ Individuation takes place in the second half of life but it is never fully achieved in this lifetime; Jung saw it as a life task. It means establishing a strong ego-Self relationship in the personality. Whilst much personality development goes on at an unconscious level, the aspirations of the Self cannot be realised without the cooperation of the ego. Jung maintains: “The opposite ego and the unconscious must be reconciled in order to bring about the transcendent function”.²⁴² The unconscious is compensatory to the conscious; when the conscious attitude is realistic, Jung gives the conscious and the unconscious about equal importance. However, when the conscious attitude is defective, the unconscious is given the higher value; the unconscious evolves into a “guiding, prospective function”, steering the conscious Self in a more worthy direction,²⁴³ seeking to restore equilibrium. Ego and shadow must work together as a balancing pair.

Since everything living strives for wholeness, the inevitable one-sidedness of our conscious life is continually being corrected and compensated by the universal human being in us, whose goal is the ultimate integration of conscious and unconscious or better, the assimilation of the ego to a wider personality.²⁴⁴

²³⁸ Michael Fordham, *Explorations*, 23-25,30.

²³⁹ Michael Fordham, *Explorations*, 22,29,103.

²⁴⁰ Stevens, *Myths*, 139.

²⁴¹ Jung, “Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation” CW 9 i, pars.489-524, in *Selected Writings*, 212,225-226.

²⁴² Jung, *Collected Works*, 000216/vol.8, 67-91.

²⁴³ Jung, *Dreams*, 42-43.

²⁴⁴ Jung, *Dreams*, 78.

Jung was the first modern psychiatrist to assert that the human psyche is inherently religious, as open to spiritual reality as it is to physical reality.²⁴⁵ He saw the spiritual element as vitally important to psychic health, emphasising the importance of individual experience.²⁴⁶ The Self is connected to God, “the transcendent”. Jung viewed the God-image as a symbol of the state of individuation, which led him increasingly to see the Self as an image of God.²⁴⁷ The psyche, having a transcendent dimension, is something to be revered; “an experience with the Self is like an experience with God”.²⁴⁸ Jung did not reject a transcendent God but was preoccupied with divine immanence, believing that people can rediscover God through the divine archetype in their unconscious.²⁴⁹ Christian critique of Jung’s spiritual ideas raises concerns. The question is whether Jung’s stance equates with the doctrine of *imago Dei* and the conception of the God within. If the Self, as the archetype of God, stirs us to worship the living God, that is laudable. Alternatively, if it means the conflation of the Self with God and self-worship, as in Satinover’s reading, “the essence of the Jungian resymbolization” is “the replacement of the divine by the self”,²⁵⁰ it is idolatry in Christian eyes.

Jung studied Gnosticism for several years and Gnostic tendencies are discernible in Jung’s spiritual understanding of the Self. He saw the Gnostic myth as symbolic of the individuation process, where the soul embarks upon an inner spiritual quest, seeking unity with the Self. However, he then alighted upon Alchemy as a better historical counterpart to his theories, in particular, the notion of the reconciliation of opposites,²⁵¹ including good and evil. “Jung’s improved God-image (‘the Self’) included within it not only evil, but matter and ‘the feminine’, on the grounds that these are a kind of ‘lower trinity’ excluded from the Godhead by ‘the patriarchy’.”²⁵²

Setting such theological unorthodoxy aside, Jung’s most profound spiritual insight in terms of the constitution of the psyche, which the world urgently needs to heed, is rather, the unconscious corruptible forces that lay within our own selves; evil “is lodged in human nature itself... as the equal and opposite partner of good.”²⁵³ This is not to say

²⁴⁵ Kelsey, *Dreams*, 28.

²⁴⁶ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 16.

²⁴⁷ Watts and Williams, *The Psychology of Religious Knowing*, 31.

²⁴⁸ Sanford, *Dreams and Healing*, 102.

²⁴⁹ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 63-64; Watts and Williams, *Religious Knowing*, 31.

²⁵⁰ Satinover, *The Empty Self*, 10.

²⁵¹ Snowden, *Jung*, 134-136.

²⁵² Satinover, *Empty Self*, 13-14, 16.

²⁵³ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 69.

that human nature is all bad but that there is wickedness within us which we ignore at our peril. We inhabit a psychological dualism, a split personality, in which we think consciousness is all there is. Jung teaches us that there is more to “self-knowledge” than knowledge of one’s conscious ego-personality.²⁵⁴ We need to become enlightened to the fact that the negative traits we project onto others arise from our own inner darkness that we cannot tolerate. The horrors of history, where the collective shadow has become an instrument of evil, are testimony to such ignorance.²⁵⁵ “Recognition of the shadow... leads to the modesty we need in order to acknowledge imperfection. And it is just this conscious recognition and consideration that are needed wherever a human relationship is to be established.”²⁵⁶ This is a necessary antidote to the unhealthy perfectionist narrative in our culture. Jung’s affirmation of the individual carries a realistic assessment and demands self-criticism.²⁵⁷ The relational element is important not to miss, given Jung’s earlier disparagement of collectivism. He continues, “The perfect has no need of the other, but weakness has, for it seeks support and does not confront its partner with anything that might force him into an inferior position”.²⁵⁸ It transpires that Jung’s stress on the significance of the individual is not at the expense of genuine relationship or social cohesion. He is alarmed by the “atomization of the pent-up mass man, whose personal relationships are undermined by general mistrust” and offers a traditional solution: “the free society needs a bond of an affective nature, a principle of a kind like *caritas*, the Christian love of your neighbor.”²⁵⁹

There is a certain resonance, then, with Christian ideals in Jung’s thinking. However, as with Freud, deliverance from our plight is dependent not upon God’s grace but upon “the psychological constitution of modern man”, the human determination to solve these ills.²⁶⁰ Modern psychology looks within to discover “truth”. Self-referential forms of identity also stem from Renaissance origins of self-worship which has its dangers.²⁶¹

A morality which attempts to derive itself purely from psyche, with reference to nothing beyond, will end up being either overtly amoral (as with reductionist psychologies deriving from Freud), or polytheistic (... spiritualistic psychologies that derive from Jung).²⁶²

²⁵⁴ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 3-4, 69.

²⁵⁵ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 67-68.

²⁵⁶ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 73.

²⁵⁷ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 72.

²⁵⁸ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 73.

²⁵⁹ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 74.

²⁶⁰ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 78.

²⁶¹ Satinover, *Empty Self*, 6-7.

²⁶² Satinover, *Empty Self*, 22.

Freud and Jung's topological models of the psyche should be taken with a degree of provisionality; they have their critics in the world of psychology as well as theology. All things considered, as working models, they provide momentous insights to assist self understanding and psychological health. We now turn Freud and Jung's successors, who translate their ideas for contemporary use, as we consider further the imperative for a healthy ego. The renowned psychiatrist James Masterson advocates a synthesis of the two schools of thought, uniting the Freudian emphasis on the effects of early development on intra-psychic structures with Jungian more holistic theories, which give credence to personal subjectivity and creativity.²⁶³ We will now look at this combined approach as we consider what happens when ego development gets distorted.

The Inauthentic Self: Ego Deficiencies

During infancy the ego needs to separate out fully from the Self and mother. Michael Fordham suggests that as well as functioning "integratively", the Self will also "deintegrate" during the natural course of child development.²⁶⁴ The integrity of the emergent ego depends upon it remaining connected to the Self. In normal development the state of primary identity, or unity, with the mother is only transitory and a new integrate forms, "a new dynamic equilibrium within the infant, corresponding to, but more differentiated than the original self unit. It is a development in the sense that part of the original self has become ego."²⁶⁵

Masterson uses the concept of the "real self" in outlining this process. The real self "includes both the intrapsychic and the unique, individual aspects of the whole person."²⁶⁶ It is mostly conscious (a narrower concept than Jung's more numinous "Self"), creating representations of the individual and the world, identifying our unique wishes and expressing them in reality. The real self comprises our various personal and professional self-images, is able to relate them to one another and comprehend them as forming an individual whole self.²⁶⁷ It "allows a person to recognize within herself that special 'someone' who persists through space and time, who endures as a unique entity regardless of how the various parts of it shift and change."²⁶⁸ The functional aspect of the real self expresses, organizes, and observes the patterns of our lives. Under its

²⁶³ Masterson, *Real Self*, 22-23.

²⁶⁴ Michael Fordham, *Explorations*, 31.

²⁶⁵ Michael Fordham, *Explorations*, 110.

²⁶⁶ Masterson, *Real Self*, 23.

²⁶⁷ Masterson, *Real Self*, 23,25-26.

²⁶⁸ Masterson, *Real Self*, 24.

guidance, we can identify and find realistic ways to achieve our individual wishes so that there is harmony between the intrapsychic real self and the external environment.²⁶⁹ From the perspective of ego psychology, the ego is the “executive arm of the self”; it helps the real self with its tasks, including, critically, reality perception.²⁷⁰ A person with a healthy real self can reasonably assess moments of questioning and self doubt and cope with life’s ups and downs.

Starting with Mahler, Psychologists have identified various stages of development through which the child passes as they separate from the mother and develop an autonomous real self. From seven or eight months until about eighteen months, the real self is activated by the child’s exploration of the world.²⁷¹ Growing independence needs to be balanced by the reassurance that the child is not alone and that the mother supports the child’s efforts to develop as a separate person.²⁷² Psychological splitting occurs when the child develops opposing self images: when they feel good they acquire a good self image and when they feel bad, a bad self image arises. Likewise, the child will interiorise “good” and “bad” mother images. One of the first tasks of the real self, around age three, is to fuse the good/bad images; the child must learn to perceive themselves and the mother as whole, constant individuals.²⁷³ The real self stabilizes intrapsychically between the ages of three and four. The childhood years are spent learning to put that system into operation in the external environment, continuing into adulthood.²⁷⁴

The developing child assumes control over their own ego functions: reality perception, frustration tolerance, impulse control and ego boundaries.²⁷⁵ Paul Federn, a loyal associate of Freud, developed the theoretical construct of ego boundaries, denoting the distinction between self and others.

The term “ego boundary” should be understood in its literal sense to mean that we feel how far the ego extends, or, more correctly, the point beyond which the ego does not extend. As regards the bodily ego feeling, this means that the ego boundary does not always coincide with the body boundaries – it may either not fill them up or may extend beyond them. The latter situation is well illustrated

²⁶⁹ Masterson, *Real Self*, 25-26.

²⁷⁰ Masterson, *Real Self*, 24.

²⁷¹ Masterson, *Real Self*, 27-30.

²⁷² Masterson, *Real Self*, 31.

²⁷³ Masterson, *Real Self*, 34-35.

²⁷⁴ Masterson, *Real Self*, 36.

²⁷⁵ Masterson, *Real Self*, 35.

by the driving motorist who always extends his bodily ego to the fenders of his car.²⁷⁶

Federn's notion of ego boundaries is flexible; the boundaries are always changing from birth onwards but there is continuity with the ego.²⁷⁷ Ego boundaries also demarcate the real from the unreal. They are both internal and external. Federn distinguished between the "inner mentality" and "external reality". Whatever enters the ego boundary from without is perceived by "extraspection" and is felt as external reality. The healthy individual senses clearly their own thoughts and imagination versus an event in the external world. When the external boundary is defective, external objects can be sensed as strange or unreal and there is a feeling of estrangement. When the inner ego boundary is weakened, unconscious contents invade the ego, thus psychotic individuals experience their delusions and hallucinations as real. Either way there is a loss of reality.²⁷⁸ Masterson agrees that fluid ego boundaries make it difficult to assess whether thoughts and feelings are external or internal. The impaired ego may project an internal mood on the outside world or confuse external circumstances with internal feeling states.²⁷⁹ People whose ego boundaries are weak are prone to using introjection as a defence mechanism.²⁸⁰

The ability to manage transitions in adult life hinges upon the success of the primary transition: the separation from the mother and the formation of the unique real self.²⁸¹ Individuation from the mother is a two-track process involving the separation of the internalised self-image from the internalized mother-image and the development of the capacities of the self. Events in the first three years, either due to nature, nurture or beyond human control, detrimental to this process can prevent its completion. Abandonment depression is an outcome, comprised of depression, panic, rage, guilt, helplessness and emptiness. The person feels that their real self is under attack or part of their very self is lost. Their sense of self is impaired and they become dominated by a false self.²⁸² The false self is not adaptive, it cannot master reality; it is defensive, to protect against painful feelings.²⁸³ The false self prevents us from knowing the truth

²⁷⁶ Federn, *Ego Psychology and the Psychoses*, 331.

²⁷⁷ Federn, *Ego Psychology*, 14,285.

²⁷⁸ Federn, *Ego Psychology*, 10-14.

²⁷⁹ Masterson, *Real Self*, 76.

²⁸⁰ Snowden, *Freud*, 136.

²⁸¹ Masterson, *Real Self*, 42.

²⁸² Masterson, *Real Self*, 51-62.

²⁸³ Masterson, *Real Self*, 23.

about our real selves, from seeing ourselves as we really are.²⁸⁴ The false self takes different guises, according to the personality disorder.

The “deflated false self”/borderline personality, stems from abandonment depression. Masterson explains that any separation stress analogous to the original traumatic separation experienced as a young child or a situation requiring self-assertion and autonomy can trigger the abandonment dynamic.²⁸⁵ Unable to tolerate the abandonment depression, the child takes steps to protect him/herself at the cost of growth and adaption, avoiding activities that would further the emergence of the real self. The real self shuts down, arresting psychological development, including ego development and functions.²⁸⁶ The ego continues to be driven by the pleasure principle, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, instead of the reality principle.²⁸⁷ The child continues to rely upon primitive defence mechanisms: denial and clinging, avoidance and distancing, projection and acting out. In order to prevent the abandonment feelings, the child denies the reality of separation. Denial and clinging become reflexive responses, fixed in the child’s personality, and the primary means of dealing with separation stresses in adulthood.²⁸⁸

Borderline personalities fail to create a unified self-concept, recognised as themselves, in both good and bad aspects. The splitting defence mechanism persists as a main defence against abandonment depression and the person’s world is still structured as it was in the first months of life. They see a “good” self engaged in immature, clinging, passive, unassertive behaviour and a “bad” self that wants to grow, assert itself, and be independent.²⁸⁹ To relieve abandonment depression and bad feelings about self-image, the borderline avoids self-expression and assertion and substitutes the superficial feeling good that comes from clinging.²⁹⁰ They are caught in a vicious cycle: any attempt to activate the impaired real self leads to depression which necessitates further defensive behaviour to avoid further depression. Adults with a deflated false self will feel as they did when children: bad, guilty, helpless, inadequate, and empty. They will only feel good and loved when they are passive, compliant and submissive to the person to whom

²⁸⁴ Masterson, *Real Self*, 63.

²⁸⁵ Masterson, *Real Self*, 84.

²⁸⁶ Masterson, *Real Self*, 75.

²⁸⁷ Masterson, *Real Self*, 78.

²⁸⁸ Masterson, *Real Self*, 76.

²⁸⁹ Masterson, *Real Self*, 78-79.

²⁹⁰ Masterson, *Real Self*, 79.

they cling for emotional support. Their emotional lives are characterised by chronic anger and frustration.²⁹¹ The deflated false self keeps a person's life empty, vulnerable, and in perpetual fear that defences will be breached.²⁹²

The “inflated false self”/narcissist, appears to be the polar opposite of the deflated false self. The narcissist's false self is characterised by imperviousness to depression. However, the defensive false self of the narcissistic personality is similarly based upon an inadequate, fragmented, poor sense of self.²⁹³ In the myth of Narcissus, upon seeing his reflection in the water, Narcissus fell in love with his own image. Riveted to the spot, he died of languor and turned into a flower.²⁹⁴ Thus, according to the eminent psychiatrist Alexander Lowen, narcissism “denotes a personality disturbance characterized by an exaggerated investment in one's image at the expense of the self.”²⁹⁵ Narcissists identify with the idealised image that they imagine themselves to be. They cannot distinguish this from who they actually are, so the actual self-image is lost.²⁹⁶ In Jungian typology we might see this as total identification with the *persona*. Lowen likens the self and its image to a person and their reflection in a mirror.²⁹⁷ Once the image is substituted for the self “the image becomes all important. The person now admires the image he or she projects... and falls in love with it. This love is not self-love, for with the façade the person has rejected the true self as unacceptable.”²⁹⁸ The paradox is that there is dependence on external admiration and self-dissatisfaction. Narcissists are insensitive to their own true needs and often their behaviour is self-destructive.²⁹⁹

Both the intrapersonal and interpersonal perceptions of the ego are impaired in the narcissist. In Freudian analysis: “The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism.”³⁰⁰ In other words, narcissists are preoccupied with themselves to the exclusion of all others.³⁰¹ Inherently selfish, they feel entitled to perfection in all things

²⁹¹ Masterson, *Real Self*, 80.

²⁹² Masterson, *Real Self*, 84.

²⁹³ Masterson, *Real Self*, 90.

²⁹⁴ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 26.

²⁹⁵ Lowen, *Narcissism*, ix. Lowen uses “self”/“true self”, in equivalence to Masterson's “real self”.

²⁹⁶ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 7.

²⁹⁷ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 7.

²⁹⁸ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 36.

²⁹⁹ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 6,25.

³⁰⁰ Freud, *On Narcissism*, 75/5.

³⁰¹ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 6.

which makes them difficult company. Narcissists are most concerned with how they appear. “Acting without feeling, they tend to be seductive and manipulative, striving for power and control. They are egotists, focused on their own interests but lacking the true values of the self - namely, self-expression, self-possession, dignity, and integrity.”³⁰² Ordinarily the self is equated with the body as well as the mind. Our sense of self comes from perceiving what is going on in the body but narcissists lack such a sense of self derived from bodily feelings. The actual bodily self-image is discarded, denying the reality of an embodied self.³⁰³ Lowen classifies the basic disturbance in the narcissistic personality as the denial of feeling.³⁰⁴

By dissociating the ego from the body or self, narcissists sever consciousness from its living foundation. Instead of functioning as an integrated whole, the personality is split into two parts: an active observing “I” (the ego), with which the individual identifies, and a passive, observed object (the body).³⁰⁵

The narcissist’s false self is more successful than the borderline’s.³⁰⁶ Arrogance of the ego occurs in all narcissistic personalities, regardless of a lack of achievement or self-esteem.³⁰⁷ Narcissism covers a broad spectrum of behaviour, from the less pathological preoccupation with sexual image, to the more psychopathic personality and full blown paranoid megalomania. The more narcissistic a person is, the greater the identification with their image and accompanying sense of grandiosity.³⁰⁸ Narcissists appear to have a deficient super-ego, given their tendency to act out their impulses. They lack self-restraint in their responses to people and situations.³⁰⁹ Freud advocated a “primary narcissism”³¹⁰ which “might claim a place in the regular course of human sexual development”.³¹¹ It is based on the observation that babies only see and think of themselves. The world revolves around the infant: “His Majesty the Baby”.³¹² According to Federn, in this stage “the ego boundary coincides with the child’s entire conceptual world”.³¹³ Freud suggested that in adulthood, the narcissism of infancy is replaced by devotion to an ideal ego set up within the person.³¹⁴

³⁰² Lowen, *Narcissism*, ix.

³⁰³ Lowen, *Narcissism*, ix, 7-8.

³⁰⁴ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 8, 46.

³⁰⁵ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 29-30.

³⁰⁶ Masterson, *Real Self*, 90.

³⁰⁷ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 6.

³⁰⁸ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 13-24.

³⁰⁹ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 9-10.

³¹⁰ Freud, *Narcissism*, 90/20.

³¹¹ Freud, *Narcissism*, 73/3.

³¹² Freud, *Narcissism*, 91/21.

³¹³ Federn, *Ego Psychology*, 294.

³¹⁴ Freud, *Ego*, xv.

We have discovered, especially clearly in people whose libidinal development has suffered some disturbance ... that in their later choice of love-objects they have taken as a model not their mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking *themselves* as a love object and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed “narcissistic”.³¹⁵

Most ego psychologists identify pathological narcissism as a failure to outgrow the primary narcissistic state. Masterson concludes that the developmental arrest appears to occur prior to the emergence of the real self in a defence against abandonment depression.³¹⁶ Lowen, however, rejects the concept of primary narcissism, arguing that narcissism “results from a *distortion* of development... something the parents *did* to the child rather than simply what they failed to do.”³¹⁷ Either way, the ability to form a self-image is a function of the ego and so narcissism is a disturbance of ego development.³¹⁸ The accuracy of ego perception depends on its connection to the self.³¹⁹ Healthy people relate to the self on two levels: directly when the body is experienced through feeling, or indirectly when we have an image of it. The self-image and the direct self-experience through the body coincide. This presupposes a self-acceptance, which is lacking in narcissists.³²⁰ Ironically then: “Without self-acceptance, there is no self-love.” Since the narcissist is not nourished by self-love, they need others to applaud their self-image,³²¹ otherwise the inflated false self becomes frustrated and the underlying emptiness, anger and depression of the impaired real self will emerge.³²² Tragically, the admiration the narcissist receives only inflates their ego; it does nothing for the true self.³²³

Although a more limited concept than Jung’s Self or Freud’s former understanding of the self as the whole person, this exploration of the “real self” has identified fundamental elements of an authentic self, consonant with Jungian and Freudian models, namely, corporeality, integrity, continuity, organising and unifying capabilities, and intra-psychic aspects. These are things not much in evidence in the postmodern self. The dysfunctional ego, sadly well represented in our present times, casts a tragic figure. It has a negative impact upon one’s sense of self and relationships with others. In deliberating the distinguishing characteristics of the inauthentic self, those of the

³¹⁵ Freud, *Narcissism*, 88/18. Italics original.

³¹⁶ Masterson, *Real Self*, 92,101.

³¹⁷ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 11-13. Italics original.

³¹⁸ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 15.

³¹⁹ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 30.

³²⁰ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 30-31

³²¹ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 31.

³²² Masterson, *Real Self*, 93,98.

³²³ Lowen, *Narcissism*, 31.

authentic self have also been made evident. We now consider how the normal functioning individual might demonstrate and further develop the positive traits of the healthy ego through emotional intelligence. This final section begins with the clinical, academic foundation, which is then adopted on a popular level. We will expound the theory here, with the intention of returning to it in a more practical way later in the thesis. Daniel Goleman serves as a transitional figure, a theorist who forms a bridge with popular culture.

The Authentic Self: Emotional Intelligence

Operating from a place of authenticity, attuned to the real self, better equips us to remain in command of our instincts and emotional drives. Masterson identifies key capacities of the real self requisite to steer a successful course through life: to experience a wide range of feelings deeply and soothe painful feelings; to expect appropriate entitlements; self-activation and assertion; acknowledgement of self-esteem; to make and stick to commitments; creativity, including finding solutions for life's problems; intimacy, expressing the real self fully and honestly in a close relationship; to be alone without feeling abandoned; continuity of self.³²⁴ This resonates with the concept of emotional intelligence (EI), or emotional quotient (EQ), which has found its way into common parlance, for instance, it is now a feature of recruitment agendas.

Developing good emotional intelligence contributes to positive mental health and well being.³²⁵ EI is an intelligence that “operates on, and with, emotional information.”³²⁶ Psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer presented the theory of Emotional Intelligence in 1990. They define emotional intelligence as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the *ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.*”³²⁷ Colin Horseman expresses this succinctly as “the skill required to understand and interpret one's own emotions and the emotions of others, and to manage those emotions in order to reach a desired outcome.”³²⁸ Thus, emotional intelligence is a way of thinking about feelings; a cognitive exercise of reasoning out

³²⁴ Masterson, *Real Self*, 42-46.

³²⁵ Salovey and Mayer, “Emotional Intelligence,” *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 191,201.

³²⁶ Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, “Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Findings, and Implications,” *Psychological Inquiry*, 209.

³²⁷ Salovey and Mayer, “Emotional Intelligence,” 189. Italics original.

³²⁸ Horseman, *Ministering with Emotional Intelligence*, 5.

how feelings operate.³²⁹ According to le Roux and de Klerk, a feeling is an internal physical reaction to a stimulus, either something perceived through the senses or a thought.³³⁰ More broadly, Salovey and Mayer view emotions as “organized responses, crossing the boundaries of many psychological subsystems, including the physiological, cognitive, motivational, and experiential systems. Emotions typically arise in response to an event, either internal or external, that has a positively or negatively valenced meaning for the individual.”³³¹

EI encompasses intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences. Salovey and Mayer identify the mental processes involved, summarised below:³³²

- a) Appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others: the skill to perceive, respond to and better express one’s own emotions, and to accurately recognise emotions in others, using verbal and non-verbal cues. Empathy, the ability to comprehend another’s feelings and to re-experience them oneself, is central. This entails sufficient social competence to weave warm interpersonal relations.
- b) Regulating emotion in the self and others: a regulatory system that monitors, evaluates, and sometimes acts to change mood. Also the ability to regulate and alter the affective reactions of others in order to motivate them toward a worthwhile end.
- c) Using emotions in adaptive ways: problem solving, flexible planning, creative thinking, mood redirected attention and motivating emotions. Having framed a problem, emotionally intelligent individuals are creative and apt to integrate emotional considerations in arriving at possible alternatives to problems.

Emotional Intelligence was popularised by the psychologist Daniel Goleman. He asserts: “emotional aptitude is a *meta-ability*, determining how well we can use whatever other skills we have, including raw intellect.”³³³ Goleman is interested in testing EQ as a performance indicator in education, business and industry, contending that EQ is just as critical, if not more so, than IQ for success in life.³³⁴ Mayer, Salovey and Caruso caution against such bold claims.³³⁵ However, they do concede that

³²⁹ Horseman, *Ministering*, 22.

³³⁰ le Roux and de Klerk, *Emotional Intelligence Workbook*, 18.

³³¹ Salovey and Mayer, “Emotional Intelligence,” 186.

³³² Salovey and Mayer, “Emotional Intelligence,” 190-200.

³³³ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 36.

³³⁴ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 34.

³³⁵ Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, “Emotional Intelligence,” 206.

empirical evidence indicates that as EI rises so does academic performance, measures of relatedness, and the ability to communicate motivating messages. Conversely, a predictable pattern emerges when the association between EI and problem behaviour is examined. EI varies inversely with bullying, violence, smoking and drug problems.³³⁶

Drawing upon the research of the neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux, Goleman explains the significance of the brain circuitry for emotional intelligence. At the seat of the ancient limbic system, the emotional part of the brain, the amygdala acts as a neural alarm system, a “psychological sentinel”, stimulating a fight or flight response.³³⁷ The more evolved, neocortical, thinking area of the brain brings a more analytic response to emotional impulses.³³⁸ Sensory signals travel first to the thalamus, from where they branch out to the amygdala and to the neocortex. Hence, there are neural pathways for feelings that bypass the neocortex. This allows the amygdala to respond before the slower neocortex, which sifts information through several levels of brain circuits before giving a considered response. In an emotional emergency an “emotional hijacking” can occur, sometimes to catastrophic effect, when the primitive brain takes charge: the rational mind is taken over by the amygdala and swamped with emotions. There is no conscious, cognitive participation to the emotional reaction. The amygdala can trigger rage or fear before the neocortex knows what is going on. People are left wondering what came over them.³³⁹ The amygdala is also a storehouse of emotional memory. The emotional brain is sculpted by childhood experience. Emotional outbursts can date from a time in our lives when we did not have words to comprehend events. We react in the present in outdated ways.³⁴⁰ Only when our rational brains analyse a situation do we take conscious control again. There needs to be discernment. Normally, the prefrontal lobes govern emotional reactions; if an emotional response is required, the prefrontal lobes dictate it, modulating the amygdala. It is about harmonising head and heart: using emotion intelligently.³⁴¹

Ordinarily the complementarity of limbic system and neocortex, amygdala and prefrontal lobes, means each is a full partner in mental life. When these partners interact well, emotional intelligence rises – as does intellectual ability.³⁴²

³³⁶ Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, “Emotional Intelligence,” 207-209.

³³⁷ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 14-16.

³³⁸ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 25.

³³⁹ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 14;17-19.

³⁴⁰ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 20-22.

³⁴¹ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 24-29.

³⁴² Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 28.

In general, there are two groups of people who lack emotional proficiency: those who are unaware of their feelings and cannot express them and those who experience their feelings intensely and express them inappropriately.³⁴³ Recalling Aristotle's challenge to manage the emotional life with intelligence, the problem is not emotions per se; there is an inherent wisdom in our "passions". The issue at stake is "the *appropriateness* of emotion and its expression."³⁴⁴ It is important to acknowledge and accept feelings and to control them; this does not mean suppressing them but pausing to choose the most fitting way to react.³⁴⁵ As Salovey, Mayer and Caruso concur, EI is about the cooperation of intelligence and emotion.³⁴⁶ The capacity to delay gratification and knowing when to challenge and reframe negative emotions, namely anger and anxiety, is vital. Goleman ventures, "The ability to control impulse is the base of will and character. By the same token, the root of altruism lies in empathy... if there are any two moral stances that our times call for, they are... self-restraint and compassion."³⁴⁷ Thus, Goleman claims EQ adds the qualities that make us more fully human.³⁴⁸

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso present a composite picture of the person with high EI as being better able to perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meanings and manage them well. Solving emotional problems requires less cognitive effort. S/he tends to be higher in verbal, social and other intelligences, be open and agreeable and have more positive social interactions. This individual is more likely to own possessions of sentimental attachment and be more adept at describing motivational goals. The high EI person is drawn to occupations involving social interactions, such as teaching and counselling, rather than those involving clerical or administrative tasks.³⁴⁹ Idealistic portraits of those with high emotional aptitudes warrant some challenge in the light of personality theory. Introverts, for example, are not naturally outgoing and gregarious but they are not necessarily lacking emotional intelligence. We will explore this further in chapter five.

The touchstone of emotional intelligence is self-awareness, being aware of both our feelings and our thoughts about the feelings as they occur. It entails an ongoing

³⁴³ le Roux and de Klerk, *Workbook*, 9.

³⁴⁴ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, xiv. Italics original.

³⁴⁵ le Roux and de Klerk, *Workbook*, 105.

³⁴⁶ Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, "Emotional Intelligence," 197.

³⁴⁷ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, xii.

³⁴⁸ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 45.

³⁴⁹ Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, "Emotional Intelligence," 210.

attention to one's internal states, both *metacognition*, awareness of thought process, and *metamood*, awareness of one's own emotions. In this self-reflexive awareness the mind observes and investigates experience itself. The "observing ego" monitors what passes through awareness with impartiality.³⁵⁰ The other key element of EQ is management of those emotions. Goleman writes: "Every strong emotion has at its root an impulse to action; managing those impulses is basic to emotional intelligence."³⁵¹ This corresponds to the Freudian model of the ego keeping the *id* in check. As a conscious, intentional process, the development of emotional intelligence depends upon the collaboration of the ego. Equally, emotional intelligence is a useful criterion for strengthening the ego and improving self-authenticity. Whilst it has entered into the popular sphere, emotional intelligence challenges contemporary narcissistic conceptions of the self and calls for a maturity which cultivates self understanding and sincere relationships.

Conclusion

From a psychological perspective, a healthy ego is essential in order to handle our inner life and the external world. If the capacities for adaptation, reality testing and defence are not developed, then the ego will be defective.³⁵² Without ego boundaries there is a poor sense of self. An under or over inflated ego will result in a false self. The ego should not merely serve its own purposes or become purely identified with the *persona*. When the ego assumes a godlike role the outcome can be disastrous. The ego needs to become conscious of more than itself, in tune with the whole bodily self/greater Self. To be authentic, it needs to act in the service of the Self/real self. The ego was created to cultivate the aspirations of this larger personality within us. Egotism and fixation on the ego leads to forgetting and betrayal of the Self. Self realisation, therefore, is far bigger than realising the myopic and selfish ambitions of the ego. Our ego task is to become conscious of unrealised aspects of ourselves to be integrated and of personality issues that need rectifying. On its own, the ego is limited, but when it maintains its connection with the Self it can journey towards the goals of the Self. In individuation the ego gives way to the Self, which becomes the new centre of the personality. The ego becomes more like the Self.³⁵³ This is a constructive way of viewing the ego within the dynamic of the Self, but psychoanalytic theory falls short of any real engagement with the self's

³⁵⁰ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 46-47.

³⁵¹ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 143.

³⁵² Pine, *Drive*, 34.

³⁵³ Michael Fordham, *Explorations*, 43,46.

interaction with others and how this impinges upon the formation of the self.³⁵⁴ The relational aspect will be addressed when we come to chapter four.

Modern psychology provides a needed corrective to the prevailing Western belief in the naturally good, self-sufficient ego, observed in the last chapter. Faithfulness to the integrity and continuity of the authentic self defies fluid and fragmented postmodern conceptions of the self. Psychology endorses self-affirmation but not without self-critique. In order to attain a realistic sense of identity, it demands that we plumb our depths to unmask our motives and endeavour to change our behaviour for the better. It requires effort and perhaps could be deemed “salvation by works”. From a Christian perspective, this belief that human beings can perfect and save themselves is a heresy that goes back to Pelagius, who asserted that human will is capable of choosing good or evil without divine aid. Pelagianism runs counter to Augustinian tradition. Psychology thus remains a human oriented approach to personal transformation. The Christian worldview is cast on a broader canopy. In the next chapter, we will investigate more traditional spiritual, God-centred approaches. However, in chapter five we will revisit psychological insights, reflecting upon the benefits of emotional intelligence for church life, including how working with the shadow and personality theory can enhance EQ.

³⁵⁴ Balswick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 80.

Chapter 3

Mystics Ancient and Modern

The Wisdom of the Desert and Beyond

Introduction

The contemplative tradition displays a change in priority from the ego to the deeper self. We can gain the impression that the mystics have typically adopted a less positive outlook on the value of the individual self than the world of psychology. We have seen this appropriated in popular culture, where the flip side of the culture of self-affirmation is ego-denial. Richard Rohr and the Enneagram regard the ego as the “false self”, whether or not it is maladaptive. The predicament of contemporary society, reiterated by Thomas Keating, is that: “We tend to identify ourselves with our false self and its concerns and with the world that stimulates and reinforces that false self.”³⁵⁵ We inhabit a sham world, asleep to reality. The false self is engrossed by its own self-importance. It stands in opposition to the contemplative tradition, wherein the chief end of human existence is to get beyond the veneer of this world, to find and identify with another self, the true self, the “Divine Ground” of our being.³⁵⁶ It is not necessarily the case that the mystics want to abolish the self altogether but that, for most, it is the eternal true self that matters; the phenomenal ego is not the real I. Thus, “To lose one’s self is to find it”.³⁵⁷ Caution is required in using the language of “ego”, since it is a later term, more characteristic of the writings of modern mystics. However, the question of the individual self and of which self we are to die to remains paramount.

The veracity of the self in the eyes of historic mystics needs to be teased out. In this chapter, we attempt to get to the grass roots to see what they have to say for themselves. Since the field is vast, it is necessary to be selective, whilst aiming to give historical breadth. We will look at the historical movements of the desert tradition, the late Middle Ages, the sixteenth century Spanish mystics and finally the modern mystic Thomas Merton. The teaching of individual mystics will be dealt with in summary fashion, with the exception of Ignatius, whose more nuanced standpoint, will be covered in greater depth. Traversing such an expanse will involve utilizing a mix of primary and secondary sources and adopting a survey-like style.

³⁵⁵ Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 44.

³⁵⁶ Happold, *Mysticism*, 20.

³⁵⁷ Happold, *Mysticism*, 46-48, 71.

To give an initial simple definition, mysticism is the quest to attain union with God.³⁵⁸ Christian mysticism is rooted in Christ, as divine ground, and entails the assimilation of our lives with his.³⁵⁹ The discovery of the true self and true union with the divine is achieved through the negation of the individual self, classically through the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways. The way of purgation entails complete detachment from and renunciation of material things, defeating the egocentric life, and a cleansing of the perceptions, so that the light of a new reality may illuminate and transform it.³⁶⁰ The ultimate prize of the unitive life is abiding union with God, “a complete and permanent synthesis and reconciliation between the *within* and the *without*.” Henceforth, “a new creature is born, a new and permanent change of consciousness has been brought about. The soul is... ‘oned’ with God.”³⁶¹ The life of union is sometimes referred to as the spiritual marriage, or more radically, as deification or annihilation of the self, inferring the total absorption of the self into the divine. In the highest mystical state the death of selfhood is complete. “The man has been ‘deified’... he looks to his centre, he sees only God.”³⁶² The notion that the self is “nothing” has implications for our sense of self. Kellenberger identifies three variants: “one is nothing and there never has been a self; one must annihilate the self and become nothing; and one must see oneself as nothing.”³⁶³

The “spiritual essence of dying to self” is the “virtue” of detachment.³⁶⁴ Though the detached person may possess worldly things, s/he is not attached to them. Inwardly unmoved by joys, sorrows or by any other passions, the detached person “is free of self-will as it expresses itself in... self-centred desires... completely free of self-concern.”³⁶⁵ To abandon self-will, is to live in accord with God’s will.³⁶⁶ Detachment is bestowed by God’s grace but requires individual effort, “self-examination, self-monitoring and the extinction of selfish desire”, to turn from self-centredness toward God.³⁶⁷ This generic picture will now be measured against the lives and teachings of prominent mystics, who do not all necessarily fit the standard pattern.

³⁵⁸ Sheldrake, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 19.

³⁵⁹ Williams, *Teresa of Avila*, 185-187.

³⁶⁰ Happold, *Mysticism*, 58.

³⁶¹ Happold, *Mysticism*, 94. Italics original.

³⁶² Happold, *Mysticism*, 95-99.

³⁶³ Kellenberger, *Dying to Self and Detachment*, 29.

³⁶⁴ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 35-36, 85.

³⁶⁵ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 49-50.

³⁶⁶ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 51.

³⁶⁷ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 167.

The Desert Movement

We begin with the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the ascetics who offered indispensable instruction on prayer. From the third to the seventh century AD, thousands of men and women withdrew into the desert regions of Egypt, the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean, to live as monks and hermits.³⁶⁸ Dissatisfied with the increased worldliness of the church, they renounced world and flesh, in search of union with God through a holier, ascetical life. In a quest to escape the illusory Christian identity proposed by the world; they had to glimpse the roots of illusion in themselves. Williams describes the desert existence as the refusal to “make human maturity before God dependent on external stimulus... the monk must learn to live with his own darkness, with the interior horror of temptation and fantasy.”³⁶⁹ It was a battleground. The soul made progress through internal conflict and spiritual warfare.

Although Anthony (251-356 AD) was regarded as the Father of the hermits and anchorites of the Egyptian deserts, he learned the ascetical life from recluses who were already there.³⁷⁰ In his late teens he heard a sermon on Matthew’s gospel about selling one’s possessions and giving the money to the poor. Williams wryly remarks, “Anthony, by the grace of God, was an unenlightened literalist.”³⁷¹ The *Life of Anthony*, attributed to Athanasius, recounts his vocation to give up everything to follow Christ into the desert, where he faced demonic temptations to return to his old life.

...his mind filled with Christ and the nobility inspired by him, and considering the spirituality of the soul, quenched the coal of the other’s deceit... And so for nearly twenty years he continued training himself in solitude... After this, when many were eager and wishful to imitate his discipline... Anthony, as from a shrine, came forth initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God.³⁷²

People continued to flock to the desert for more than a hundred years after Anthony’s death. A traveller in 394 AD reported that the dwellers there all but equalled the population of the towns.³⁷³ Stories suggest that there were a number of women anchorites hidden there, some disguised as men.³⁷⁴ Three women ascetics, Sarah, Syncletica and Theodora, regarded as *ammās*, are included in the collection *Sayings of*

³⁶⁸ Ryrie, *The Desert Movement*, 1.

³⁶⁹ Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge*, 96-97.

³⁷⁰ Nataraja, “The Desert Tradition,” in *Journey to the Heart*, 96.

³⁷¹ Williams, *Wound*, 95.

³⁷² Comby, *How to Read Church History*, vol.1, 82-83.

³⁷³ Waddell, *The Desert Fathers*, 4-5.

³⁷⁴ Ryrie, *Desert*, 103-105.

the Desert Fathers.³⁷⁵ A primitive monasticism spread rapidly in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia. There continued a struggle against demons and human passions, entangling the life of the spirit, needing to be dug out by the roots.³⁷⁶ The monks showed hospitality to those who sought their spiritual advice. However, their lives were characterized by an ever competitive asceticism. Dendrites lived in trees; recluses in hovels; Stylites perched on the tops of pillars; Adamites abandoned their clothes.³⁷⁷ They were not distracted by vain matters such as personal hygiene and they lived on the minimum of food.

The great Macarius, indeed, seems to have been moved for a while by the ill spirit of competition. Did he hear that one Father ate only a pound of bread, himself was content to nibble a handful of crusts: did another eat no cooked food for the forty days of Lent, raw herbs became his diet for seven years.³⁷⁸

Macarius the Great was a disciple of Anthony and teacher of Evagrius (346-399 AD), one of the most influential Desert Fathers. Evagrius was part of the “orthodox” Church, receiving his early formation from the Cappadocian Fathers. He had an important ecclesiastical career before falling in with the Origenist circle in Jerusalem.³⁷⁹ Evagrius withdrew to the Egyptian desert to become a monk around 383 AD, and leader of the intellectual Origenist monks. His heretical cosmology alleged that in the beginning humanity was essentially good: all are spirit, pure intuitive intelligence, enfolded in the Divine but through negligence turn away from God. God subsequently forms three levels of creation: angels, humans and demons. Human beings retain their intuitive intelligence (*nous*) as their divine essence. They are given souls, the seat of the passions, and rational intelligence to understand them. The human vocation is to discover the divine image within and return to union with the Divine through purification of the emotions and contemplation.³⁸⁰

Ryrie stresses that although Evagrius’ works are influenced by Origen and neo-platonic thought, his teaching is deeply rooted in the biblical tradition and based upon his experience of living with the desert monks; “he can be regarded as the first great theorist and psychologist of the way of the desert.”³⁸¹ Evagrius acquired great insight

³⁷⁵ Ryrie, *Desert*, 105-109.

³⁷⁶ Waddell, *Desert Fathers*, 10.

³⁷⁷ Comby, *Church History*, 82.

³⁷⁸ Waddell, *Desert Fathers*, 11.

³⁷⁹ Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 330-331.

³⁸⁰ Nataraja, “Desert Tradition,” 96, 109-112, 114.

³⁸¹ Ryrie, *Desert*, 153, 161.

into the workings of the human mind, recognising the important role of the emotions or “passions”. When driven by material desires and unmet needs, they cloud vision and obstruct access to the *nous*, the highest part of the soul, and to the Divine. Evagrius identified eight “evil thoughts”, *logismoi*, (gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, sadness, acedia/sloth, vainglory and pride) which have to be “purified and transfigured” so that “ego” desires no longer hold sway. The remedy is the way of detachment, firstly, through living the monastic life and secondly, through the discipline of watching thoughts to identify those that are disordered, attracting the “demons”. Victory over the demons leads to emotional balance, harmony and awareness of the divine within.³⁸² Evagrius lived an extremely ascetic life in the manner of the eremitic monks, including a diet of only uncooked food and undertaking feats of endurance.³⁸³

Evagrius sets out the ascetic life as a progression of stages. The first stage *praktikê*, is comprised of the “external or practical” aspects of the desert life, such as manual work, ascetic practices and solitude but also the inner ascesis. It involves cleansing the soul of the passions to bring about a state of *apatheia*, “passion-less-ness” and tranquillity. The second stage, *gnostikê*, mystical knowledge, involves pure prayer and contemplation, first of created beings and then of God, through which one reaches *gnosis*, knowledge of God.³⁸⁴ Here, Evagrius insisted that even thoughts and images of God have to be discarded, in accord with the apophatic tradition.³⁸⁵ Granted his Origenist philosophy, on the Gnostic life, Evagrius departs from the other desert monks, but his teachings on prayer are in line with them. Like the other monks, Evagrius was concerned with unceasing prayer. He is principally concerned with “pure prayer”, the fruit of *apatheia*; a deeply personal engagement with God.³⁸⁶ Evagrius combined mind and heart; both theology and spiritual experience were important. His influence was strong in the East, and also transmitted through Cassian to the West.³⁸⁷

John Cassian (c.360-c.435 AD) spent about fifteen years with the desert fathers in Egypt. For Cassian, the harder virtues (magnanimity, humility, gentleness) to which asceticism led were more important.³⁸⁸ He is best known for his two major works, *The*

³⁸² Ryrie, *Desert*, 151-157; Nataraja, “Desert Tradition,” 113-120.

³⁸³ Ryrie, *Desert*, 152.

³⁸⁴ Ryrie, *Desert*, 154-155, 158.

³⁸⁵ Nataraja, “Desert Tradition,” 115-116.

³⁸⁶ Ryrie, *Desert*, 159-161.

³⁸⁷ Clément, *Mysticism*, 332.

³⁸⁸ Waddell, *Desert Fathers*, 12.

Institutes and *The Conferences*, which set out the way of life of the monks in Egypt to provide a pattern for monks in the West.³⁸⁹ Cassian was true to the desert tradition in keeping prayer at the heart of his writings. He goes beyond discussing the nature of prayer to deal with the practical issues. Cassian's aim was unceasing prayer through repetition of a word or phrase chosen from scripture. It was repeated over and over again until it became rooted in the heart. A brief "formula" from the opening words of Psalm 70, "O God be pleased to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me," is recommended as a method of reaching unceasing prayer. This "can lead to 'an unspeakable ecstasy of heart' in which the mind transcends 'all feelings and visible matter'."³⁹⁰ It culminates and is surpassed in the prayer of fire: "The various kinds of prayer... are followed by a higher state still... it is the contemplation of God alone, an immeasurable fire of love. The soul settles in it and sinks into its depths."³⁹¹ Cassian's mysticism is a mysticism of light; the divine light pervading the whole person, including the subconscious mind.³⁹² It is also a mysticism of love and union. Writing about Christ's prayer for unity in John 17:

God will be our love and our longing, our study and our thinking. He will be our life. The unity of the Father with the Son and of the Son with the Father takes possession of our feelings and of our mind. And in the same way that God loves us completely, we shall be united with him by a love that will never grow less, to the point that we shall be breathing, thinking and speaking in him.³⁹³

Cassian, deeply influenced by Evagrius, adopted his distinction between the practical and contemplative aspects of the monastic life but with greater reference to the bible and in a more down to earth manner.³⁹⁴ He uses Evagrius' taxonomy of the eight principal vices and shows how each affects people in different ways. He develops the theme of renunciation or detachment, seeing it both as a practical and inner thing, involving three stages: renouncing worldly goods, previous patterns of behaving and thinking, and finally all visible reality.³⁹⁵ For Cassian, the ultimate end, *telos*, of the monastic life is "the kingdom of God", entering the life of heaven, and the goal or object, *skopos*, is "purity of heart", "having a heart untouched by the passions."³⁹⁶

³⁸⁹ Ryrie, *Desert*, 161.

³⁹⁰ Ryrie, *Desert*, 168-169.

³⁹¹ Cassian, *Conferences*, IX, 18, in Clément, *Mysticism*, 207.

³⁹² Clément, *Mysticism*, 352.

³⁹³ Cassian, *Conferences*, X,7, 210-211.

³⁹⁴ Ryrie, *Desert*, 163.

³⁹⁵ Ryrie, *Desert*, 165-166.

³⁹⁶ Ryrie, *Desert*, 164,167-168,170.

In the spirituality of the desert, the preoccupations of ego must be overcome in order to touch the True. Williams suggests this “primitive monasticism” is a mixed blessing. Positively, seeing conflict as the means of growth opposes complacency and a self-orientated spiritual life. Negatively, there is the emphasis on effort and vigilance, sometimes seen as “glorification of will at the expense of grace”; the “sleepless alertness, which often seems simply neurotic and lays itself open to... a spirituality of the super-ego.” On balance, Williams concludes favourably that the Desert Fathers give priority to grace, confirmed by their profound acceptance of failure.³⁹⁷

The Late Middle Ages

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, new forms of religious life, such as the mendicant orders of Franciscans and Dominicans and the independent Beguines, provided the impetus for a new mysticism inclusive of women. Built upon the riches of the monastic contemplative tradition, it broke with the traditional stress on flight from the world, maintaining that mystical union with God was accessible to all Christians. Teaching was often in the vernacular.³⁹⁸

The prominent German preacher and Dominican, Meister Eckhart (c.1260-1327),³⁹⁹ was influenced by the Thomist tradition of his order, Augustine and possibly Origen, Evagrius, Cassian and also Neo-platonism.⁴⁰⁰ Eckhart developed an original articulation of faith in philosophical terms; a synthesis of Greek thought and the Christian faith.⁴⁰¹ Eckhart was both a mystic and a philosopher-theologian.⁴⁰² His “mysticism of being” belongs to the apophatic tradition; an unmediated experience of God in which the soul is raised beyond the material world, transcending all images, to enter into the “nothingness” of the Godhead.⁴⁰³ For Eckhart union with God is achieved through the intellectual way, a mysticism of knowledge and understanding. It is by a process akin to cognition: “We achieve union with God as one who *knows* is in union with that which is *known*.”⁴⁰⁴ Eckhart identified Augustine’s “ground of the soul” with Aristotle’s “agent

³⁹⁷ Williams, *Wound*, 97.

³⁹⁸ Sheldrake, *Dictionary*, 21.

³⁹⁹ Davies, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, 23.

⁴⁰⁰ Nataraja, “Meister Eckhart,” in *Journey to the Heart*, 206.

⁴⁰¹ Davies, *Selected Writings*, xxxvii.

⁴⁰² McGinn, *The Mystical thought of Meister Eckhart*, 21.

⁴⁰³ Davies, *God Within*, 3-4.

⁴⁰⁴ Davies, *God Within*, 4. Italics original.

intellect” to give rise to the idea that the human soul is itself intellect.⁴⁰⁵ He believed that the individual soul and God exist in an essential relation that is entirely natural and part of the structure of the self.⁴⁰⁶ Eckhart asserts: “The soul takes its being directly from God; therefore God is closer to the soul than she is to herself and therefore God is present in the soul with the whole of his divinity.”⁴⁰⁷

The overriding metaphor used to explore the process of our growth towards God is the “birth of God in the soul”. It stems from the nature of God and the “ground” (*grunt/grund*) of the soul,⁴⁰⁸ where *grunt* is what is inmost, hidden or most proper to a being, indicating the hidden depths or essence of God.⁴⁰⁹ For Eckhart, “God’s ground and the soul’s ground is *one* ground... they are *both grounded in the same ground* in a fused identity... the ground is nothing other than the ‘uncreated something *in* the soul’”.⁴¹⁰ The birth takes place in this divine “Something” of the soul.⁴¹¹ We can tell whether the birth has occurred in us by the incidence of love in us, exhibiting passivity to God’s will and a devout filial relationship.⁴¹² There is a moral significance: “only they ‘who walk in the ways of God’ can understand this birth.... Through the birth we are made ‘like God’, we are sanctified and established in virtue.”⁴¹³ The outcome of the birth of God in the soul is to transform us into the Son,⁴¹⁴ which stands not only for a changed state of being but also of knowing. Thus, for Eckhart, “God is known with God in the soul; then she knows herself with this wisdom and all things, and this same wisdom knows her with itself, and with the same wisdom she knows the Father’s sovereignty in fertile generative power”.⁴¹⁵ There is proportionality between our readiness to receive and the extent to which God is born in us. When the soul is prepared by becoming empty of all images, then God is compelled to enter its ground and be born there.⁴¹⁶

⁴⁰⁵ Davies, *Writings*, xix.

⁴⁰⁶ Davies, “Meister Eckhart,” *The Way* 37, 334-335.

⁴⁰⁷ Eckhart, Sermon 15, in Davies, *Writings*, 169.

⁴⁰⁸ Davies, *Mystical Theologian*, 149.

⁴⁰⁹ McGinn, *Eckhart*, 41-42.

⁴¹⁰ McGinn, *Eckhart*, 45. Italics original.

⁴¹¹ Davies, *God Within*, 56.

⁴¹² Davies, *Mystical Theologian*, 153.

⁴¹³ Davies, *Writings*, xxviii.

⁴¹⁴ Davies, *God Within*, 57.

⁴¹⁵ Eckhart, Sermon 12, in Davies, *Writings*, xxviii, 157.

⁴¹⁶ Davies, *Mystical Theologian*, 151-152; Eckhart, Sermon 18, in Davies, *Writings*, 186-187.

The birth of God has taken already place in the detached person.⁴¹⁷ Oliver Davies highlights the convergence of metaphysics and ethics in Eckhart's concept of "detachment", which means "being cut off from". Detachment is both freedom from our physical appetites and liberation of the mind.⁴¹⁸ So long as we remain captive to our physical existence, the spirit is restrained by worldly images and not free to realise its potential. The true nature of the soul is imageless, hence divine. In genuine detachment, the spirit transcends the created dimension: "we emulate the Godhead itself, and the process of 'detachment' is simultaneously the process of our divinization".⁴¹⁹ Eckhart's teaching on detachment is an exposition of Christian virtue. The detached person "is loving and humble, possessing serenity and wisdom, and with a will wholly taken up by God."⁴²⁰ Pre-eminence is given to the virtue of humility, synonymous with detachment and the basis of our union with God.⁴²¹ Eckhart claims: "perfect humility proceeds from annihilation of self."⁴²² Evidently, Eckhart regards the self as nothing, placing him at the extreme end of the self-denial spectrum. The process of detachment starts with giving up our own will, culminating in complete self-abandonment, where surrendering the sense of self, and relinquishing the sense of possession are one. Eckhart concludes: "The more we strip ourselves of ourselves the more we become him."⁴²³

The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* counters Eckhart with the assertion: "be extremely careful never to embark upon the world of contemplation as an intellectual experience."⁴²⁴ This spiritual classic, written in England, in the latter part of the fourteenth century by an anonymous spiritual director priest, is a mysticism of love and union. The central message is that God cannot be known through the intellect, knowledge or reason, but through love alone: "By love he may be sought and held but not by thought."⁴²⁵ Accordingly, "In contemplation God is loved in this way: nothing else is sought. There is a naked intent, a single-mindedness of spirit, directed towards God alone."⁴²⁶ This "naked intent" is simply that the will of God be fulfilled. The contemplative will enter a thick "cloud of unknowing" or deep darkness where God is.

⁴¹⁷ Davies, *Writings*, xxix.

⁴¹⁸ Davies, *Writings*, xxix.

⁴¹⁹ Davies, *Mystical Theologian*, 163-164.

⁴²⁰ Davies, *Writings*, xxx-xxxi.

⁴²¹ Davies, *Mystical Theologian*, 167-168.

⁴²² Cited by Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 20.

⁴²³ McGinn, *Eckhart*, 144; Davies, *Mystical Theologian*, 169-170.

⁴²⁴ *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 27.

⁴²⁵ *Cloud*, 29.

⁴²⁶ *Cloud*, 51.

“By ‘darkness’ I mean a lack of ‘knowing’... you cannot see it with your spiritual eye.”⁴²⁷ It is the negative way, influenced by the apophatic theology of pseudo-Dionysius.⁴²⁸ The path to penetrate the darkness is found through “longing love” and naked intent.

When you first begin, you may find only darkness – a cloud of unknowing, as it were. It will seem incomprehensible, meaningless, except that in your innermost will you will feel a simple steadfast intention reaching out towards God. No matter what you do, this darkness, this cloud, will seem to remain between you and God. It will stop you seeing God in the clear light of rational understanding and from experiencing his loving mercy in your inner being. But be reconciled to the fact that you must wait in this darkness as long as necessary, and don’t give up. Continue to struggle, longing to know God whom you love.⁴²⁹

In the end, the stirring of love is entirely the work of God. God alone enables contemplation; we receive it as gift. We are passive but willing participants. “Your soul will be helped by God’s grace when it consciously longs to be in union with God.”⁴³⁰ It may take a long time before we are able to truly contemplate. We must be patient and persevere. All mental activity must be suppressed, hidden in a “cloud of forgetting”, between ourselves and all creation.⁴³¹ Our desire should be for God alone. To this end, the contemplative is to root the repetition of a little word in the heart; simply “God” or “Love”.⁴³² Constant vigilance is required: “Keep an eye on your enemy, your self. Don’t fall into the trap of pride”.⁴³³ Sin is not to be analysed but spurned: “Feel sin as a lump of nothing else but yourself! Recognise the whole of you as sin”.⁴³⁴ Harsher still, a person’s “awareness is occupied and filled with the foul nauseating lump of himself, which must be hated, despised and forsaken if he is to be God’s perfect disciple”.⁴³⁵ This betrays a hostile view of human nature and the self. In common with Eckhart, such self-loathing underlines a severe understanding of humility.⁴³⁶ There is an absurdity to existence: “Though he desires desperately to be free of this awareness of his being, yet he greatly wants to continue to exist and gives God whole-hearted thanks for his precious gift.”⁴³⁷ Thankfully, by God’s grace, the virtues can be wrought in the human

⁴²⁷ *Cloud*, 28.

⁴²⁸ Glasscoe, *English Medieval Mystics*, 172.

⁴²⁹ *Cloud*, 23-4.

⁴³⁰ *Cloud*, 23.

⁴³¹ *Cloud*, 28, 53.

⁴³² *Cloud*, 31.

⁴³³ *Cloud*, 22.

⁴³⁴ *Cloud*, 65.

⁴³⁵ *Cloud*, 69.

⁴³⁶ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 24.

⁴³⁷ *Cloud*, 70.

soul. Those who have God do not have sin.⁴³⁸ Purity of spirit is required: “the more spiritual your soul becomes the less it desires physical sensation. Then it draws closer to God”.⁴³⁹ Deification is the final outcome but the essential otherness of creature and creator is maintained: “It is entirely by God’s undeserved mercy and grace that you are made a god, inseparably united to him in spirit both now and in the bliss of heaven... although, by grace you are wholly one with God, yet by nature you are far beneath him.”⁴⁴⁰

For the Anchorite Julian of Norwich (c.1342-c.1416), like the author of *The Cloud*, union with God is achieved through the way of love: “he made everything for love; the same love sustains everything, and shall do for ever”.⁴⁴¹ There are resonances of Eckhart: “God is nearer to us than our own soul, for he is the ground on which our soul stands”.⁴⁴² On her supposed death bed, Julian received sixteen “showings”, a series of visions focused around Christ’s passion. She recovered and wrote two versions of *Revelations of Divine Love*.⁴⁴³ Julian begins by stating her desire for three “gifts” from God, fulfilled by her illness. Firstly, a “vivid perception” of Christ’s Passion in order to “suffer with him”. Secondly, bodily sickness to the verge of death at the age of thirty, “to be purged by the mercy of God and afterwards to live more to God’s glory”. Thirdly, three “wounds” of true contrition, compassion and an earnest longing for God.⁴⁴⁴ This gruesome apprehension must be viewed within the context of the emergent affective theology of the day, which placed an emphasis on Christ’s Passion arousing people’s compassion. The incarnation was a means of stirring human love for God as an object for identification and imitation. Bodiliness made God’s presence felt.⁴⁴⁵ In medieval times, suffering was seen as having illuminative possibilities for those who desired to know God.⁴⁴⁶ According to Marion Glasscoe, in her visionary experience centred on the cross, Julian comprehends the psychological reality of the “three wounds” as an inner, healing process which restores humans to a creative integrity and frees us from our inadequacies.⁴⁴⁷

⁴³⁸ *Cloud*, 65-66.

⁴³⁹ *Cloud*, 73.

⁴⁴⁰ *Cloud*, 97.

⁴⁴¹ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 52.

⁴⁴² Julian, *Revelations*, 133.

⁴⁴³ Julian, *Revelations*, Introduction by A.C. Spearing.

⁴⁴⁴ Julian, *Revelations*, 42-43.

⁴⁴⁵ Julian, *Revelations*, Introduction, xiv-xv.

⁴⁴⁶ Glasscoe, *Mystics*, 215.

⁴⁴⁷ Glasscoe, *Mystics*, 216.

Julian recognises a reciprocal relationship of mutual indwelling: “Our soul is made to be God’s dwelling place, and the dwelling place of the soul is God”.⁴⁴⁸ She perceives the soul as having two aspects: *substance* and *sensuality*, generally translated as “essential being” and “sensory being”, or “higher nature” and “lower nature”.⁴⁴⁹ A dichotomy arises between the “godly will which never consented to sin” and the “animal will in our lower nature which can have no good impulses”.⁴⁵⁰ This seemingly Gnostic understanding of the human soul begs the question whether God only recognises our higher nature since, “God judges us in terms of our natural essence, which is always preserved unchanged in him”.⁴⁵¹ However, it becomes evident that Julian believes God firmly embraces our lower nature as well. Both aspects of the soul are “united in God”. God is the “summit of essential being.”⁴⁵² Julian’s apophatic theology comes to the fore in her language of “noughting”, in addressing the need for self-emptying and humility before God. She comes dangerously close to the heretical teaching of the “Free Spiritism” movement, where the soul is seen as annihilated or subsumed into the nature of God. Yet, the language used by Julian to describe the contemplative act of noughting remains penitential. She embeds the process of humble self-emptying, in order to be united with God, within the practices of the Church that enabled the contrite soul to see itself in relation to God.⁴⁵³ Julian admits: “I saw no difference between God and our essential being, it seemed to be all God, and yet my understanding took it that our essential being is in God... God is God, and our essential being is a creation within God”.⁴⁵⁴ Thus, Julian preserves the essential distinction between us and God.

The re-union of substance and sensuality is dependent upon our growing in self-knowledge. Since our essential being is hidden in God, our growth in self-knowledge is contemporaneous with our growth in God-knowledge.⁴⁵⁵ “[O]ur soul is so deeply grounded in God... that we cannot attain knowledge of it until we first know God, the Maker to whom it is united.”⁴⁵⁶ Julian then gives precedence to self-knowledge: “we can never attain full knowledge of God until we first know our own soul clearly”.⁴⁵⁷ In

⁴⁴⁸ Julian, *Revelations*, 130.

⁴⁴⁹ Julian, *Revelations*, Introduction, xxvii.

⁴⁵⁰ Julian, *Revelations*, 93.

⁴⁵¹ Julian, *Revelations*, 106.

⁴⁵² Julian, *Revelations*, 132-134.

⁴⁵³ Talk by Emma Pennington.

⁴⁵⁴ Julian, *Revelations*, 130.

⁴⁵⁵ Margaret Lane, “Julian of Norwich,” in *Journey to the Heart*, 268.

⁴⁵⁶ Julian, *Revelations*, 133.

⁴⁵⁷ Julian, *Revelations*, 134.

order to arrive at knowledge of ourselves and God, we need to be healed by the “medicines” of contrition, compassion and true longing for God.⁴⁵⁸ Both justification and sanctification are at work: “the Holy Ghost shapes in our faith the hope that we shall rise up again to our essential being, into the virtue of Christ.”⁴⁵⁹ Prayer unites our will to God’s will and brings about lasting change: the object of our prayers is “to be united with and like our Lord in every way.”⁴⁶⁰ For Julian, the life of devotion is predominantly about sharing in the life and Passion of Christ, knowing ourselves and our need of God, thereby recognising our weakness, which by the grace of God will all be redeemed in the end. God’s unconditional love and goodness are encountered in the trials of life, consequently “all manner of things shall be well”.⁴⁶¹ Julian is deeply affirmative of the self but only via searing purgation. As Marc Cortez notes, she recognises both the devastating impact of sin on humanity, and that the true core of the person is at one with God. Julian’s is a cross-shaped anthropology, which is ultimately “an anthropology of hope”.⁴⁶²

The Sixteenth Century Spanish Mystics

We now arrive at a historical turning point and encounter the revolutionary mystic St Ignatius. The homogenization of Spanish society under Roman Catholic rule in 1492, after almost 800 years of Muslim, Christian and Jewish interaction and the assimilation of the wealth of the discovered New World, provides the context of the great Spanish mystics.⁴⁶³ Each, in his, or her, own way, was keen to unmask the delusions of the successful. Mental prayer came to be divided into distinctive forms of prayer: discursive meditation where thoughts predominated; affective prayer where the emphasis was on acts of the will; and contemplation where graces were infused by God.⁴⁶⁴

Keating observes, “The genius and contemplative experience of Ignatius of Loyola led him to channel the contemplative tradition which was in danger of being lost, into a form appropriate to the new age.”⁴⁶⁵ Ignatius (1491-1556) intense visionary experiences

⁴⁵⁸ Lane, “Julian”, 268, Julian, *Revelations*, 95-96.

⁴⁵⁹ Julian, *Revelations*, 131.

⁴⁶⁰ Julian, *Revelations*, 101.

⁴⁶¹ Julian, *Revelations*, 79,83,85.

⁴⁶² Cortez, *Christological Anthropology*, 57-58,69.

⁴⁶³ Peter Tyler, “St John of the Cross,” in *Journey to the Heart*, 302.

⁴⁶⁴ Keating, *Open*, 21.

⁴⁶⁵ Keating, *Open*, 22.

are documented in his life story.⁴⁶⁶ Karl Rahner argues that it was genuinely mystical because of what was going on in the core of Ignatius' person, the real miracle behind the imaginative reality, else it is meaningless phenomena.⁴⁶⁷ Ignatian mysticism has inspired an ordinary, everyday mysticism, viewing the world as a sacrament.⁴⁶⁸ It entails being a contemplative in action in the world. John Sachs describes Ignatian mysticism as a "service mysticism" in contrast to the "bridal mysticism" of his Spanish Carmelite contemporaries.⁴⁶⁹ Once desirous of worldly praise and military glory, a prolonged period of convalescence precipitated a spiritual awakening in Ignatius. He realised that romantic daydreams left him feeling empty and dissatisfied. Whereas his dreams of labouring with Christ gave him a deep inner joy and peace, leaving him feeling inspired and energized. It revealed that the vain worlds of court and battlefield were empty, less real and permanent than the sacrificial world of service for Christ. Within himself, Ignatius experienced the first movements of "the discernment of the spirits", of "desolation" and "consolation", for determining God's will. It was the awareness, not just of an intellectual truth, but of the living God, active in Ignatius's own life and to whom he needed to respond.⁴⁷⁰

Ignatius used his imagination to enter into the gospel scenes and participate in the plot. This adventure into imaginative prayer became a powerful catalyst for the growth of his personal relationship with Christ and vocation. Ignatius was ordained priest in 1537 and grounded his prayer experiences in years of theological study.⁴⁷¹ Towards the end of his life, he was urged to write *The Spiritual Exercises*, the distillation of his experiences, making them available to others for their own journey of transformation. *The Spiritual Exercises* are designed to be undertaken as a 30 day retreat. However, Ignatius makes provision for those for whom this is not possible to undertake *The Exercises* in daily life.⁴⁷² The book is intended as a manual for Spiritual Directors and sets out a series of spiritual exercises; prayers, contemplations, meditations and additional directions. *The Exercises* are structured around the main truths of God's plan of salvation for human beings. Beginning in week one with meditations on sin and hell, it then moves on to consider Christ's incarnation, life, passion and resurrection in weeks two to four. They

⁴⁶⁶ *St. Ignatius' Own Story*.

⁴⁶⁷ Endean, ed., *Karl Rahner: Spiritual Writings*, 61-62.

⁴⁶⁸ Sachs, "Ignatian Mysticism," *The Way Supplement* 82, 73,76.

⁴⁶⁹ Sachs, "Mysticism," 77-78.

⁴⁷⁰ *St. Ignatius' Own Story*, 7-12.

⁴⁷¹ *St. Ignatius' Own Story*, 39ff.

⁴⁷² Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Annotation 19, 8-9.

are Trinitarian in outlook, for example, in the first contemplation on the incarnation, we are enjoined to see the world through the eyes of the Trinity.⁴⁷³ “Contemplation” in *The Exercises* denotes imaginative contemplation, gazing upon a concrete object in the imagination, using the “application of the senses” to interact with the persons in the gospel scene as if they were present. This method, introduced in the second week, is aimed at developing affective prayer.⁴⁷⁴

Paragraph 21 gives the purpose of *The Spiritual Exercises* as: “*the conquest of self and the regulation of one’s life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment.*”⁴⁷⁵ Ivens’ translation phrases it as: “The *overcoming of self* and the *ordering of one’s life* on the basis of a *decision* made in freedom from any disordered attachment.”⁴⁷⁶ This corresponds to the first annotation, which explains that the many methods used in *The Exercises* are for preparing and disposing “the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and... seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul.”⁴⁷⁷ It is enlarged upon in the preface, “The First Principle and Foundation” (P&F), which poetically lays the foundation and sets the scene for the whole of *The Exercises*:

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God,
our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for man
to help him in attaining the end for which he is created.

Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him
in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself
of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things,
as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition....

Our one desire and choice should be what is more
conducive to the end for which we are created.⁴⁷⁸

The first half of the P&F spells out the theological principle and the second half, the practical outworking. It discloses a world affirming spirituality; creation is viewed as fundamentally good. All things are created by God and can draw us to God. As far as

⁴⁷³ Puhl, *Exercises*, 49.

⁴⁷⁴ Puhl, *Exercises*, 54-55; Keating, *Open*, 22.

⁴⁷⁵ Puhl, *Exercises*, 11. Italics original.

⁴⁷⁶ Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 22. Italics original.

⁴⁷⁷ Puhl, *Exercises*, 1.

⁴⁷⁸ Puhl, *Exercises*, 12.

Ignatius is concerned, we find God, not by turning away from the world, but by turning towards it. There is an emphasis upon divine immanence and involvement in creation.⁴⁷⁹ God enters the concrete details of our daily lives. The primary and mystical goal of *The Exercises* is to bring the exercitant to freedom through finding God in all things and all things in God. This is the basis for the *discernment of spirits* and the practice of *The Examen*⁴⁸⁰ (explored in chapter five). Ignatian “indifference” differs from detachment in that it is not about being cut off from the world but about standing in the place of balance, free and poised to do God’s will. The challenge is to let go of whatever prevents us from heeding God’s call. The object is attachment to God above all else. When we discover God as our deepest desire, everything else is cast into its proper place. The supreme end is the greater glory of God, achieved through service of God.

Given this majestic beginning, it may strike as a disjuncture when the exercitant is then plunged into an abyss of meditations on sin and hell in the First Week of *The Exercises*. However, the natural consequence of experiencing God’s love for us and all creation, is to want to be free from desires which do not meet the end of the P&F. Joseph Veale elucidates, “The other side of the Principle and Foundation is a sense that I am not free, that I cling to many things whether they are God’s will for me or not, that my capacity to love is imprisoned in a thousand ways.”⁴⁸¹ The focus of the First Week is the disorder that comes from the refusal or failure to respond to God’s love. The week begins with universal/structural sin before moving onto personal sin, concluding with the fiery meditation on hell.⁴⁸² There is a deepening of the desire from “shame and confusion”, to a “growing and intense sorrow” for my sins, to feeling “a deep sense of pain which the lost suffer”.⁴⁸³ One might think that Ignatius has not sufficiently emerged from the medieval mindset, with its graphic fixations on hell and damnation, but it is important not miss the grace of the first week, namely, to know myself as a loved sinner. It is in recognition of our own need for forgiveness and healing that we are moved by gratitude for God’s continuing love and mercy and the gift of life.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁷⁹ Sachs, “Mysticism,” 75-77.

⁴⁸⁰ Sachs, “Mysticism,” 77-78.

⁴⁸¹ Veale, “The First Week,” *The Way Supplement* 48, 18.

⁴⁸² Puhl, *Exercises*, 25-33.

⁴⁸³ Puhl, *Exercises*, 26,29,32.

⁴⁸⁴ Veale, “First Week,” 24.

George Croft identifies the formation of a more mature Christian conscience as an important psychological aspect of *The Exercises*, particularly in the First Week.⁴⁸⁵ He casts an interesting trajectory into Freudian thought regarding the unlimited impulses of the *id* that need to be controlled by the ego and super-ego, the origin of conscience.⁴⁸⁶ The super-ego is seen as a forerunner of a mature Christian conscience, “right reason in grace”.⁴⁸⁷ Permitting tentative use of Croft’s correlation, it is agreed that true contrition does not entail rejection of oneself as a person. Such a view, prone to viewing God as a punishing despot, indicates an immature “*super-ego* pseudo-morality.”⁴⁸⁸ Far from rejecting us because of past sins, God invites us to join in the divine project on earth. We resolve to re-order our lives around God and respond to the call of Christ the King. The Kingdom Meditation forms a bridge between weeks one and two.⁴⁸⁹

In the Second Week, the exercitant is invited into a relationship of growing intimacy with Christ by contemplating gospel scenes on Jesus’ life and ministry. The desire is to follow Christ more closely. There are a series of meditations, culminating in the Election, “Making a choice of a way of life”, which aim to bring the retreatant to greater freedom, ready to do whatever God wants of him or her.⁴⁹⁰ Peter Fennessy notes that the Election, whatever form it takes, entails suffering since it demands giving up other choices incompatible with commitment to Christ. After the Election, as one moves into Week Three, inordinate attachments, conflicting with God’s will, persist.⁴⁹¹ The Third Week, on the Passion, invites us to look beyond ourselves into a deeper identification with Christ.⁴⁹²

Fennessy offers an explanation of the Third Week dynamic: By staying and suffering compassionately with Christ, by letting go of our fears, we “die psychically with him to what we fear and what we desire”, then we discover that this death to everything except God’s will is not death at all; we fall into the hands of God. We “have there everything, God and all that is his.”⁴⁹³ Fennessy likens the retreatant to an onion; each contemplation peels off another layer, as s/he dies to different aspects of the old self.

⁴⁸⁵ Croft, “Psychological Aspects of the Spiritual Exercises,” *The Way Supplement* 1, 44.

⁴⁸⁶ Croft, “Psychological Aspects,” 45.

⁴⁸⁷ Croft, “Psychological Aspects,” 46.

⁴⁸⁸ Croft, “Psychological Aspects,” 47. Italics original.

⁴⁸⁹ Puhl, *Exercises*, 43-45.

⁴⁹⁰ Puhl, *Exercises*, 49-71.

⁴⁹¹ Fennessy, “Praying the Passion,” in *A New Introduction to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 75.

⁴⁹² Puhl, *Exercises*, 81-88; Mansfield, “Praying the Passion,” *The Way Supplement* 58, 35.

⁴⁹³ Fennessy, “Praying the Passion,” 74.

“By a gradual progression the retreatant moves closer to the center of his being, to what is most personal, most repressed, most difficult and the strongest attachment. The last barrier to fall will be letting go of concern for our own existence, facing the fear of death, and surrendering all things.”⁴⁹⁴ At this stage of renunciation, we are convinced of the contingency of created things, have died to ourselves and the world, and completely entered into the death of Christ.⁴⁹⁵

Despite this self-forgetfulness, the climax in the retreatant’s process of moving out of self towards Jesus, Philip Sheldrake maintains that we cannot avoid the inherent individualism in the text. This does not call for an individualistic interpretation in the modern sense of the word. The emphasis in the Third Week appears to be on what Christ suffered for me, making it intensely personal, yet we remain situated in a wider context.⁴⁹⁶ Taking *The Exercises* as a whole and relating it to our present situation, where the text of *The Exercises* comes to life, we recognise that the nature of God is to be a suffering God, who shares in human pain.⁴⁹⁷ “The ‘passionate engagement’ by God has an eternal quality that implies an extension of the Passion of God into the very fabric of the human family.”⁴⁹⁸ Like Jesus who took on the cross in a conflict-ridden historical situation, the retreatant is to situate him/herself in the specific circumstances of a broken world in need of redemption. If the Christ towards whom we move is the “one for others”, then “the grace of the Third Week involves compassion, *with* Christ, *for* the world. Suffering with Christ also means sharing in the universal meaning of his suffering.”⁴⁹⁹ The dynamic of the Third Week is driven by a strong affective bond and love of Christ, stronger than all other loves.⁵⁰⁰ Having died to sin and been buried with Christ, we rise with him in the Fourth Week.⁵⁰¹ As Fennessy stresses, “Only by entering into the death of Christ can we also enter into his risen joy.”⁵⁰²

The Exercises reflect the classical spiritual path: purgative in Week One, illuminative, following the way of Christ, in Week Two, and unitive in Weeks Three and Four, obtaining union with God in Christ’s passion and resurrection. George Aschenbrenner

⁴⁹⁴ Fennessy, “Praying the Passion,” 82.

⁴⁹⁵ Fennessy, “Praying the Passion,” 84.

⁴⁹⁶ Sheldrake, “Theology of the Cross and The Third Week,” *The Way Supplement* 58, 22-23,33.

⁴⁹⁷ Sheldrake, “Theology of the Cross,” 22-28.

⁴⁹⁸ Sheldrake, “Theology of the Cross,” 28.

⁴⁹⁹ Sheldrake, “Theology of the Cross,” 33. Italics original.

⁵⁰⁰ Fennessy, “Praying the Passion,” 80.

⁵⁰¹ Puhl, *Exercises*, 95-98.

⁵⁰² Fennessy, “Praying the Passion,” 86.

affirms, “ignatian method in prayer is really a matter of progressive concentration and integrative assimilation of a human person’s powers in an interpersonal encounter of love... entering ever more thoroughly into the mysterious union of love.” Profoundly, “we become whom we contemplate.”⁵⁰³ Exercitants arrive at the final summit where they make the prayer of self-offering, the “Contemplation to attain the love of God”, or *Contemplatio*, which forms a bridge back into daily life:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.⁵⁰⁴

The *Contemplatio* expresses a mutuality between creature and Creator. The grace, “an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received, that filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve the Divine majesty”, echoes the P&F.⁵⁰⁵ There is a sense of coming full circle but the ending is also a beginning. This total surrender to God necessitates a starting disposition, on the part of the exercitant, of generosity of heart and openness to God.⁵⁰⁶ The *Contemplatio* draws together the themes of *The Exercises* in their entirety and reaches beyond into everyday life. The contemplative paradigm reinforces the spirituality of finding and loving God in all things, the lasting outcome of the exercises.⁵⁰⁷ Reflecting upon the *Contemplatio*, and how self-forgetting love moves out into the world in service, Rahner voices, “people find their own selves by serving, labouring, going outward – losing oneself in the service of others. Since this love seeks not self but God, and God’s world”.⁵⁰⁸

The Exercises, suitably adapted, are an enduring method for self-transformation in faith. Aschenbrenner writes, “In this interpersonal process God is carefully and insistently calling us away from our false self and exposing a new self, glorious in this world and... in eternity.”⁵⁰⁹ Aschenbrenner insists that serious contemplation is a “mortifying experience”, requiring “the mortification of our deceitful self”. He regrets that the daily asceticism of going against the false self, an essential component of mysticism, has often historically been misunderstood as simply “going against self” without qualifying

⁵⁰³ Aschenbrenner, “Becoming whom we Contemplate,” *The Way Supplement* 52, 31-32.

⁵⁰⁴ Puhl, *Exercises*, 102.

⁵⁰⁵ Puhl, *Exercises*, 101.

⁵⁰⁶ Puhl, *Exercises*, Annotation 5, 2.

⁵⁰⁷ Ivens, *Spiritual Exercises*, 169.

⁵⁰⁸ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 60.

⁵⁰⁹ Aschenbrenner, “Becoming,” 30.

which self we are to go against/die to.⁵¹⁰ He warns that deficient experience of God's love can instigate a destructive going against self that undercuts the healthy self-acceptance necessary for human spiritual development.⁵¹¹

We see this quandary in Ignatius' thinking, where the self comes under considerable scrutiny. His life story details his very austere lifestyle. In *The Exercises* he provides rules for eating and abstinence to avoid gratification.⁵¹² He suffered terrible "scruples" over his past sins which, with the help of his confessor, he came to see was obsessively unhelpful.⁵¹³ Ignatius advocated penance, including bodily chastisement, "sensible pain", rather than anything which would cause "serious internal infirmity".⁵¹⁴ Despite Ignatius' preoccupations with sin and self-abnegation, his theology is primarily self-accepting. He held to a strong doctrine of *imago Dei*. Writing on the *Contemplatio*, "This is to reflect how God dwells in creatures... and makes a temple of me, since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty."⁵¹⁵ Aschenbrenner concludes that the divine initiative is uppermost in the Ignatian method. The power to go against the false self is a mystical grace, God's love seeking to transform our human hearts and world, which entails a necessary interrelationship of contemplation and mortification. Such mortification "is really an experience of God, not a repressive denial of self." In this way *The Exercises* can bring us to "a new self", discovered as we enter into the intimacy of Jesus with the Father.⁵¹⁶

Talk of the false/new self invites the question of the standing of the ego, a term obviously not in Ignatius' vocabulary. Using the four aspects of Leovinger's ego model - impulse control, interpersonal style, cognitive style and conscious preoccupations - Mary Jo Meadow endeavours to illustrate how ego development parallels the concerns of the four weeks of *The Exercises*.⁵¹⁷ In keeping with Croft's hypothesis, impulse control relates to the conscience development and moral growth exhibited in Week One. Ignatius insists upon a thorough examination of the moral self, in all its disorder, and urges self control, in the knowledge of God's loving goodness. "Growing out of self-centred action... is the task of conscience development. It begins with managing grosser

⁵¹⁰ Aschenbrenner, "Becoming," 33.

⁵¹¹ Aschenbrenner, "Becoming," 33.

⁵¹² Puhl, *Exercises*, 89-91.

⁵¹³ *St Ignatius' Own Story*, 19ff.

⁵¹⁴ Puhl, *Exercises*, 37-38.

⁵¹⁵ Puhl, *Exercises*, para. 235, 102.

⁵¹⁶ Aschenbrenner, "Becoming," 33-34.

⁵¹⁷ Meadow, "Personal Growth and the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises," *Way Supplement* 73, 13.

impulses to damaging behaviour.”⁵¹⁸ The Second Week involves developing a mature relationship with Jesus, which requires the exercitant to become increasingly responsible and mutual in relationship, as in Loevinger’s model. It also entails putting on the mind of Christ in other relationships.⁵¹⁹ The third aspect of ego growth, cognitive style, “describes how we understand and react to our existence.” Growth requires a sense of paradox, tolerance for ambiguity and cognitive uncertainty, in which the taxing Ignatian Third Week provides an education. The retreatant shares in Jesus’ intense anguish and learns through suffering.⁵²⁰ In the final aspect of ego development, “conscious preoccupations”, the things we ruminate upon indicate what is important to us. This is the final “acid test” of the Fourth Week’s fruits. The grace sought, to enter into the joy of the risen Lord, calls for decreased emphasis on oneself and a change in the retreatant’s attitudes and aspirations. The *Contemplatio* summarizes the stance of centring one’s entire being in God.⁵²¹ Whilst Meadow demonstrates a correspondence between psychology and Ignatian spirituality, such a direct mapping stretches this somewhat.

Ruth Barnhouse makes an even more perilous case that Ignatius shares the same inheritance of Western individualism as Sigmund Freud, which she arguably claims has its source in Augustine.⁵²² She draws many comparisons between the Ignatian and psychoanalytic methods of transformation.⁵²³ Ultimately, for Freud, the therapists task was complete when patients had achieved sufficient self-knowledge and self-esteem to free them from disordered attachments and neurotic guilt. Ignatius had a more cosmic perspective. For him, self-knowledge is accompanied by God’s grace. Reasonably, Barnhouse concludes that that *The Exercises* teach us how to avoid the selfish dangers of excessive individualism, while retaining a sense of personal responsibility.⁵²⁴

Thomas Clarke makes a starker contrast between contemporary individualism and Ignatian Prayer, deeming the cultural narcissistic preoccupation with the self, psychological or spiritual, to be “a betrayal and caricature of genuine self-

⁵¹⁸ Meadow, “Personal Growth,” 14,17-19.

⁵¹⁹ Meadow, “Personal Growth,” 14,19-20.

⁵²⁰ Meadow, “Personal Growth,” 14,21-22.

⁵²¹ Meadow, “Personal Growth,” 14,22-23.

⁵²² Barnhouse, “The Spiritual Exercises and Psychoanalytic Therapy,” *Way Supplement* 24, 74-75.

⁵²³ Barnhouse, “Psychoanalytic Therapy,” 74-82.

⁵²⁴ Barnhouse, “Psychoanalytic Therapy,” 82.

awareness.”⁵²⁵ However, he allows that there are moments in the spiritual journey when we need to risk focusing on the self. We see this in the intentions of Ignatius, a solitary pilgrim, who was led “to create an instrument through which individuals would be helped to lose and to find their unique selves. The Spiritual Exercises, as a paradigm for all Ignatian prayer, embrace this brand of individualism”.⁵²⁶ The First Week scrutinizes the particulars of my sinfulness, the Second Week calls for personal commitment and a deep sense of the uniqueness and value of the self is implied in the preparatory prayers. That unique self goes before Christ crucified for me in Week Three. Nevertheless, Clarke identifies safeguards in *The Exercises* against narcissistic self-indulgence: Ignatian prayer is dialogical in character, the self is always supported and challenged by truthful interaction with a significant other, whether human (the giver of the exercises) or divine. Furthermore, the Kingdom, Two Standards and Three Kinds of Humility meditations, oppose dependence on worldly acclaim for self-esteem and self-love.⁵²⁷

Ignatian mysticism reveals a profound sense of love and intimacy with the triune God, who labours in the world and calls us to be a companion of Jesus in the work of the kingdom.⁵²⁸ God-centred, not self-centred, behaviour is the aspiration, yet the sanctity of the human individual is still affirmed. It is not ego-denial as such but, rather, the ego is displaced from the centre and finds its ultimate end in the service of God. In the notes on the Additional Directions, one reason Ignatius provides for penance is “to overcome self”, which corresponds to the purpose of *The Exercises*, stated earlier. Accordingly, Ivens comments: “Conversion is a graced process of personal integration”.⁵²⁹ In the same vein, Barnhouse maintains that Ignatian Mysticism shares the premise of psychoanalytic therapy, that undertaking *The Exercises* involves an integrating process within the self, which for Ignatius takes place with reference to God.⁵³⁰ In the Ignatian scheme, this entails the integration of our whole personality, all our attachments, so that they can be used for the greater glory of God. When our desires are directed towards God, when God is our greatest attachment, then we are in touch with our true Self.

St Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) was a contemporary of Ignatius. The summit of her instruction, *Interior Castle*, written for the nuns of Our Lady of Carmel “to solve their

⁵²⁵ Clarke, “Ignatian Prayer and Individualism,” *Way Supplement* 82, 8.

⁵²⁶ Clarke, “Individualism,” 8.

⁵²⁷ Puhl, *Exercises*, 43-45, 60-62, 69; Clarke, “Individualism,” 9.

⁵²⁸ Sachs, “Mysticism,” 81.

⁵²⁹ Ivens, *Spiritual Exercises*, 72.

⁵³⁰ Barnhouse, “Psychoanalytic Therapy,” 78.

difficulties concerning prayer”,⁵³¹ was born out of reflections upon her own mystical experiences, “mystical theology”.⁵³² It was “knowledge of God” formed in the soul at God’s initiative; a real knowing acquired through being receptive rather than active.⁵³³ For Teresa, as Ignatius, the sole purpose of human existence is to praise and honour God. Giving God one’s whole self is an inward journey of increasing detachment from worldly things.

The master metaphor of *Interior Castle* is the soul as a castle “in which there are many rooms” through which the soul may advance on this inner journey to the “chiefest mansion” at the centre.⁵³⁴ The door of entry is “prayer and meditation”.⁵³⁵ In the First Mansions, the soul is enamoured with sin. Much soul searching and self-knowledge is required before progress can be made.⁵³⁶ Knowing oneself means recognising the fallibility of our human nature and need of God. We know ourselves, in humility, by looking at God.⁵³⁷ Self-preoccupation, however, leads to false humility and depression: “so long as we are buried in the wretchedness of our earthly nature” we remain trapped in “the slough of cowardice, pusillanimity and fear.”⁵³⁸ Such a condition stems from lack of self-knowledge. “We get a distorted idea of our own nature... we must set our eyes upon Christ... from Whom we shall learn true humility”.⁵³⁹ Rowan Williams underlines the inherent paradox: “By directing the mind to the perfection of the self as an object in its own right it keeps one *bound* to the self; whereas,.. the point of real self-knowledge is to become free of the self”.⁵⁴⁰ Williams concludes: “The first ‘mansions’, then, are the place where we are struggling to break free from obsessive and defensive concern with self”.⁵⁴¹

With the Second Mansions comes increased understanding.⁵⁴² In the Third Mansions the soul has attained a high standard of virtue, practising acts of charity and penance.

⁵³¹ Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 14.

⁵³² Teresa of Ávila, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by Herself*, 71.

⁵³³ Williams, *Teresa of Avila*, 71-72.

⁵³⁴ Teresa, *Castle*, 15-16.

⁵³⁵ Teresa, *Castle*, 18.

⁵³⁶ Teresa, *Castle*, 23.

⁵³⁷ Williams, *Teresa*, 147-149.

⁵³⁸ Teresa, *Castle*, 23.

⁵³⁹ Teresa, *Castle*, 24.

⁵⁴⁰ Williams, *Teresa*, 148. Italics original.

⁵⁴¹ Williams, *Teresa*, 150.

⁵⁴² Teresa, *Castle*, 29-31.

Yet, “Without complete self-renunciation, the state is very arduous and oppressive”.⁵⁴³ In the Fourth Mansions “we begin to touch the supernatural”. More by God’s efforts than the individual’s, graces are received in the form of “spiritual consolations”.⁵⁴⁴ The Fifth Mansions mark a new high degree of infused contemplation, accompanied by increased emphasis upon dying to self: “Let us renounce our self-love and self-will, and our attachment to earthly things. Let us practise penance, prayer, mortification, obedience, and all the other good works”.⁵⁴⁵ In the Sixth Mansions, Lover and Beloved grow in intimacy. The soul receives increasing favours and afflictions, either exterior (sickness, misrepresentation, persecution), or interior (depression).⁵⁴⁶ Union with God is characterised by raptures, out of body experiences, visions and heavenly insights. There is “a notably intellectual, vision, in which is revealed to the soul how all things are seen in God, and how within Himself He contains them all.”⁵⁴⁷ Williams observes: “it is a stage in which the conscious, planning ego has completely lost control”.⁵⁴⁸ Teresa highlights three outcomes: “knowledge of the greatness of God... self-knowledge and humility... a supreme contempt for earthy things, save those which can be employed in the service of... God.”⁵⁴⁹

The Spiritual Marriage occurs in the Seventh Mansions: The Lord brings his bride “into this Mansion of His... before consummating the Spiritual Marriage.”⁵⁵⁰ This secret union “takes place in the deepest centre of the soul... where God Himself dwells... the soul is... is made one with God... they have become like two who cannot be separated from one another.”⁵⁵¹ The effect is “complete transformation, ineffable and perfect peace; no higher state is conceivable”.⁵⁵² There is no more preoccupation with the “inner life”. The tension of the first mansion is dissolved. The soul is so absorbed by God that true detachment from everything is possible: “These souls... have no aridities or interior trials but a remembrance of Our Lord and a tender love for Him”.⁵⁵³ The legitimacy of this prayer experience is known by its effects. Firstly, there is complete “self-forgetfulness”, since the soul is so entirely employed in honouring God. Secondly,

⁵⁴³ Teresa, *Castle*, 5,37-43.

⁵⁴⁴ Teresa, *Castle*, 5,46-55.

⁵⁴⁵ Teresa, *Castle*, 71.

⁵⁴⁶ Teresa, *Castle*, 5,86-139.

⁵⁴⁷ Teresa, *Castle*, 138-139.

⁵⁴⁸ Williams, *Teresa*, 175.

⁵⁴⁹ Teresa, *Castle*, 114.

⁵⁵⁰ Teresa, *Castle*, 147.

⁵⁵¹ Teresa, *Castle*, 152.

⁵⁵² Teresa, *Castle*, 6,146-167.

⁵⁵³ Teresa, *Castle*, 158,178.

a great desire to suffer provided it becomes a means of Christ's praise.⁵⁵⁴ Thus, self-denial, purgation and detachment, with the supreme goal of absorption into the divine, are embedded in Teresa's method. Yet, she never polarised the active and contemplative life. The "goal is not simply 'mystical' union but a union in action with God's involvement in creation."⁵⁵⁵

St John of the Cross (1542-1591), educated by the Jesuits, entered the Carmelite order, studying theology and philosophy before being ordained priest. St Teresa of Ávila enlisted him in reforming the order but he suffered persecution and imprisonment by those opposed to the reforms.⁵⁵⁶ His best known work, *Dark Night of the Soul*, is an exposition of the poem *On a Dark Night*, written during his imprisonment at Toledo, which portrays the Christian as a lover seeking divine union with Christ. In this mystical and philosophical work, John reasons that the soul must become negated of self before it can be filled with God.⁵⁵⁷ His earlier works focused upon the "Active Night, of Sense"; now he tackles the "Passive Night", shifting from our own purging of our faculties to the purifying action of God.⁵⁵⁸ Despite being an apophatic theologian, John's mystical theology is also a theology of experience.⁵⁵⁹ Peter Tyler writes:

what John refers to as the 'Dark Night', is a place of the deepest existential anxiety and trauma. It is the place where we encounter our own nothingness and insecurity. Yet it is also the *noche dichosa* – the blessed, warm, Mediterranean night – when God reveals God's self. It is a place of paradox.⁵⁶⁰

The principal benefit of the dark night is the "virtue of self-knowledge" but, as with Teresa, it is not self-knowledge in the modern sense. John cites St Augustine's dictum that self-knowledge leads to God-knowledge.⁵⁶¹ Thus, "God will enlighten the soul, giving it knowledge, not only of its lowliness and wretchedness ...but likewise of the greatness and excellence of God."⁵⁶² There are two kinds of "dark night" corresponding to the two parts of human nature: the sensual and the spiritual.⁵⁶³ In Book I, John addresses the "Night of Sense", initially by working through the seven deadly sins. It

⁵⁵⁴ Teresa, *Castle*, 156-157.

⁵⁵⁵ Williams, *Teresa*, 48-49.

⁵⁵⁶ Tyler, "John of the Cross," in *Journey*, 305-310.

⁵⁵⁷ John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, v-vi, xiv, 3.

⁵⁵⁸ John, *Dark Night*, ix-x.

⁵⁵⁹ Talk by Colin Thompson.

⁵⁶⁰ Tyler, "John of the Cross," 312.

⁵⁶¹ John, *Dark Night*, 33.

⁵⁶² John, *Dark Night*, 32.

⁵⁶³ John, *Dark Night*, 19.

comes to those on the Christian journey whom God desires to lead further. They have lost their love of worldly things, exercise some self-restraint and have gained a degree of spiritual strength in God. However, we cannot vanquish our disordered attachments through our own efforts; only the love of Christ can transform the soul.⁵⁶⁴ The night and purgation of sense in the soul is called “the way of illumination or of infused contemplation”.⁵⁶⁵ The more advanced “Night of the Spirit”, the subject of Book II, is for the few.⁵⁶⁶ It may take years after being in the night of sense before the soul is ready to pass into “that terrible night of contemplation”.⁵⁶⁷ The dark night of the soul causes great suffering and darkness:

the Divine assails the soul in order to renew it and thus to make it Divine; and, stripping it of the habitual affections and attachments of the old man, to which it is very closely united,... destroys and consumes its spiritual substance, and absorbs it in deep and profound darkness. As a result of this, the soul feels itself to be perishing and melting away.⁵⁶⁸

According to Williams, this annihilation of the self “involves an acute sense of rejection, humiliation and worthlessness, a sort of dissolution of the sense of *self*”.⁵⁶⁹ Paradoxically, as the spirit endures this extreme purgation, God also illumines it with Divine light, although the soul does not realise, believing itself to be in darkness. The darkness continues for as long as needed.⁵⁷⁰ “This is naught else but His illumination of the understanding with supernatural light, so that it is no more a human understanding but becomes Divine through union with the Divine.”⁵⁷¹ Thus the soul is purified, transformed and enkindled with love: “The spirit feels itself here to be deeply and passionately in love... in as much as this love is infused, it is passive rather than active, and thus it begets in the soul a strong passion of love.”⁵⁷² The “dark contemplation” by which the soul ascends to the union of love is likened to a “secret ladder” of love comprised of ten steps. The final step “causes the soul to become wholly assimilated to God, by reason of the clear and immediate vision of God which it then possesses”. By this stage “there is naught that is hidden from the soul”.⁵⁷³ Divine union is referred to as

⁵⁶⁴ Tyler, “John of the Cross,” 313.

⁵⁶⁵ John, *Dark Night*, 38.

⁵⁶⁶ John, *Dark Night*, 20.

⁵⁶⁷ John, *Dark Night*, 41-42.

⁵⁶⁸ John, *Dark Night*, 50.

⁵⁶⁹ Williams, *Wound*, 177. Italics original.

⁵⁷⁰ John, *Dark Night*, 59-61.

⁵⁷¹ John, *Dark Night*, 78.

⁵⁷² John, *Dark Night*, 68.

⁵⁷³ John, *Dark Night*, 87-98.

“Divine betrothal between the soul and the Son of God.”⁵⁷⁴ The soul cannot achieve this union without great purity and “detachment from every created thing and sharp mortification.”⁵⁷⁵ John was familiar himself with such mortifications but cautions against the “spiritual gluttony and pride” of going to vicious extremes.⁵⁷⁶ Equally, he is critical of those who strive to seek “spiritual pleasure and consolation”, as this goes against self-denial.⁵⁷⁷ There are two sides to St John of the Cross, intertwined, as Happold observes, he is the apostle of absolute detachment and absolute love.⁵⁷⁸ Anything which gives reign to the ego must be eradicated, including the self, at the same time, “we are called at the centre of our being” to seek God’s love.⁵⁷⁹ It is certainly a creative tension.

Modern Mystics

From the seventeenth century, the mechanistic universe worldview of scientific materialism discouraged any intrinsic connectedness between humanity and God. The mystical tradition retreated underground, to re-emerge at the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸⁰ In this section, we have time to refer to just one noteworthy mystic.

The Cisterian monk, mystic, poet, artist, writer and political activist, Thomas Merton (1915-1968), saw the eremitical life as a way of finding one’s true self in Christ. He advanced from a prodigal youth to being a “zealous, ascetic, world-despising young monk”, to a world-affirming, “man of love, of compassion, of presence”.⁵⁸¹ His later books assimilate psychological and spiritual insight.⁵⁸² A fellow monk wrote, “The journey to full human integration is what life is all about for Thomas Merton”.⁵⁸³ He centred the Christian life on contemplation. Solitude and contemplative prayer are tools for living in the everyday world.⁵⁸⁴ Entering into the realm of contemplation entails dying to the “false self”, an outward obstacle we worship instead of God, “in the tenacious need to maintain our separate, external egotistic will.” When we refer

⁵⁷⁴ John, *Dark Night*, 109.

⁵⁷⁵ John, *Dark Night*, 109-110.

⁵⁷⁶ John, *Dark Night*, 15.

⁵⁷⁷ John, *Dark Night*, 17.

⁵⁷⁸ Happold, *Mysticism*, 355.

⁵⁷⁹ Tyler, *St John of the Cross*, 57.

⁵⁸⁰ Liz Watson, “Evelyn Underhill,” in *Journey to the Heart*, 342.

⁵⁸¹ Pennington, *Thomas Merton My Brother*, 26-29.

⁵⁸² Peter Tyler, “Thomas Merton,” in *Journey to the Heart*, 380.

⁵⁸³ Pennington, *Merton*, 14.

⁵⁸⁴ Tyler, “Merton,” 368, 377.

everything to this false self we alienate ourselves from reality and God.⁵⁸⁵ This superficial, “empirical self”, which we commonly identify with the first person singular, stands in opposition to our “real self”, that “deep transcendent self that awakens only in contemplation”.⁵⁸⁶ Employing the language of modern psychology, Merton gives no credence to the ego, fully identifying it with the false self: “The creative and mysterious inner self must be delivered from the wasteful, hedonistic and destructive ego that seeks only to cover itself with disguises.”⁵⁸⁷

God created us to be an individual self, giving us freedom to be real or unreal, true or false. “Our vocation is... to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny.”⁵⁸⁸ Crucially, “The secret of my full identity is hidden in Him. He alone can make me who I am, or rather who I will be when at last I fully begin to be.”⁵⁸⁹ Self-knowledge and God-knowledge are inextricably linked: “If I find Him I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find Him.”⁵⁹⁰ God dwells in the depths of our being, “not only as my Creator but as my other and true self.” This has a Jungian resonance; God is found at the very centre of the Self and indeed is the Self.⁵⁹¹ Dwelling in us, Christ becomes “our superior self, for He has united and identified our inmost self with Himself... a supernatural union of our souls with His indwelling Divine Person gives us a participation in His divine sonship and nature.”⁵⁹² Those who have responded in faith to Christ’s love, participate in his divine nature. This is not an inseparable union; it is “an accidental union: yet... it is a mystical union in which Christ Himself becomes the source and principle of divine life in me.”⁵⁹³

In his diary Merton expresses his one desire, “for solitude - to disappear into God, to be submerged in His peace, to be lost in the secret of His Face.”⁵⁹⁴ The indwelling Christ precipitates a process of sanctification: “In perfect humility all selfishness disappears and your soul no longer lives for itself... it is lost and submerged in God and

⁵⁸⁵ Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*, 2,17.

⁵⁸⁶ Merton, *Contemplation*, 5-6.

⁵⁸⁷ Merton, *Contemplation*, 30.

⁵⁸⁸ Merton, *Contemplation*, 23-25.

⁵⁸⁹ Merton, *Contemplation*, 26.

⁵⁹⁰ Merton, *Contemplation*, 28.

⁵⁹¹ Merton, *Contemplation*, 32, 107-109.

⁵⁹² Merton, *Contemplation*, 123.

⁵⁹³ Merton, *Contemplation*, 123-124.

⁵⁹⁴ Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, 15-16.

transformed into Him.”⁵⁹⁵ Merton ventures further, using the language of annihilation. The essence of mystical union “is a pure and selfless love that empties the soul of all pride and annihilates it in the sight of God, so that nothing may be left out of it but the pure capacity for Him.”⁵⁹⁶ The quest for the true self involves dying to self, the selfish egotistical self. “In order to become myself I must cease to be what I always thought I wanted to be, and in order to find myself I must go out of myself, and in order to live I have to die.”⁵⁹⁷ Merton counters the worldview of modern individualism: “All sin starts from the assumption that my false self, the self that exists only in my own egocentric desires, is the fundamental reality of life to which everything else in the universe is ordered.”⁵⁹⁸ The monastic vocation demands complete self-renunciation. Monastic vows dispose the postulant to get rid of all attachments.⁵⁹⁹

The contemplative needs to be detached in order to cease seeing oneself at the centre of the universe: “We do not detach ourselves from things in order to attach ourselves to God, but rather we become detached *from ourselves* in order to see and use all things in and for God.”⁶⁰⁰ This view of detachment echoes the Ignatian P&F; all things have the potential to be used in God’s service if we are one with God’s love. This includes the body, which is “neither evil nor unreal” and should not be despised or identified with the “false self”.⁶⁰¹ In similar vein, detachment does not entail cutting oneself off from the world. Merton’s outlook developed from other-worldly monasticism to seeing the spiritual journey as more engaged with his fellow humans, finding his authentic self through spiritual freedom and God in all things.⁶⁰² Upon finding himself and true freedom, Merton concluded: “I am the utter poverty of God. I am His emptiness, littleness, nothingness, lostness... my life is His freedom, the self-emptying of God in me is the fullness of grace.”⁶⁰³ Merton’s later interest in eastern religions did not modify his understanding of Christianity but opened up new ways of thought and experience that invigorated him.⁶⁰⁴ Merton is a complex character, whose views evolved over time. On the face of it, he was unambiguously anti-ego but he was also highly affirmative of

⁵⁹⁵ Merton, *Contemplation*, 140-141.

⁵⁹⁶ Merton, *Contemplation*, 141-142.

⁵⁹⁷ Merton, *Contemplation*, 37.

⁵⁹⁸ Merton, *Contemplation*, 27.

⁵⁹⁹ Merton, *Sign of Jonas*, 7,26.

⁶⁰⁰ Merton, *Contemplation*, 17. Italics original.

⁶⁰¹ Merton, *Contemplation*, 21.

⁶⁰² Tyler, “Merton,” 368-369,374-375.

⁶⁰³ Pennington, *Merton*, 47.

⁶⁰⁴ Furlong, *Merton: A Biography*, xvii.

the deep/real self, which unites with and finds its purpose in Christ. It follows logically, that talk of annihilation refers to the false/ego self.

Conclusion

St Teresa instructs those in her charge: “it is to die for Christ, and not to practise self-indulgence for Christ, that you have come here.”⁶⁰⁵ We have witnessed a divergence in what is understood by dying to self. Debatably, those, such as Eckhart and John of the Cross, who sanction destroying a sense of our own self, are going too far. Kellenberger identifies an inherent contradiction in the belief that the self needs to be obliterated: “one of the cognitive elements to religious humility... is a recognition of one’s relation to God.” This “requires that in one’s self-understanding one is a person or self in relation to God. Arguably, then... religious humility itself requires that one be a self.”⁶⁰⁶ Predominantly, the mystics draw a distinction between the surface, “false self”, which many would identify with the ego (without necessarily accessing that language), and the inner, true self. Authentic spirituality affirms the true self, which is discovered and finds its vocation in God.

There is merit in ascetic disciplines intended to purge the egotistical desires of the false self but masochistic practises amounting to bodily self-abuse are questionable. Kellenberger explains that the medieval world characterised humility as self-abasement but now it means being free of self-concern. Ironically, self-abasement involving self-concern opposes religious humility and detachment.⁶⁰⁷ As St Teresa deduced, self-preoccupation with self-perfection leads to a false humility and ties us to the self. Instead, religious humility and detachment necessitate a negation of the self that is a renunciation of self-concern, compatible with self-respect.⁶⁰⁸

[D]etachment allows self-love when it is free of a self-concern that is self-centred, as it allows self-respect free of such self-concern. Proper self-love... contrasts with... self-oriented attitudes that involve a hidden self-concern, like self-effacement and self-abasement. Self-hate also involves self-concern, for its focus is on the importance of the self.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ Teresa of Ávila, *The Way of Perfection*, 91.

⁶⁰⁶ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 31.

⁶⁰⁷ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 23-35, 145-147.

⁶⁰⁸ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 152-153.

⁶⁰⁹ Kellenberger, *Detachment*, 161.

Psychology and spirituality are not so opposed; both are concerned with becoming our true selves. This is corroborated by the possibility of parallels, however tenuous, between the Ignatian exercises and psychoanalytic theory. Ignatius, in particular, highlights the importance of the individual and the uniqueness of his or her journey, but it is not an isolated one. Judaeo-Christian teaching, as conveyed in *The Exercises*, is not world denying but affirms creation and sees humans as a psychosomatic unity. Instead of self-loathing, self-love is required, as Keating proclaims: “When you truly love yourself, you become aware that your true Self is Christ expressing himself in you”.⁶¹⁰ Over preoccupation with sin begs the question: does it lead to knowledge of oneself as a loved sinner or self-concern? Those like Ignatius and Merton, who understand detachment as indifference, where all things may be used in God’s service if our relationship with them is uncorrupted, have the most holistic view, in keeping with the doctrine of creation. If Christ is our greatest attachment, all else finds its proper place. As Williams concludes:

The paradox of Christian mysticism... is that there is *no* detached divine absolute with which to take refuge. We may and must detach ourselves from all that keeps us from God: our sin, our fearfulness and false humility, our pride of race or family; but the God with whom we are finally united is the God whose being is directed in love towards the world, which we must then re-enter, equipped to engage with other human beings...⁶¹¹

This more relational approach will now be advanced in the next chapter.

⁶¹⁰ Keating, *Open*, 103.

⁶¹¹ Williams, *Teresa*, 206.

Chapter 4

Self-Giving Love: Learning from Christian Doctrine

Towards an Understanding of Personhood

Introduction

Moving on from the mystics, we come to the crux of the ego denial/development debate in a theological understanding of the self, which draws upon Christological and Trinitarian anthropologies. Social Trinitarians hatch a settlement to the dispute between self-affirmation and self-denial, between over identification with the self and spurning the self. Their development of a relational anthropology, utilizing the Cappadocians, unites the two poles. This chapter is directed towards this end and the locus is relational. We will discuss *imago Dei*, Christological *kenosis* and the Trinity, all with the view to a relational anthropology.

Karl Rahner maintains that we cannot do theology without also doing anthropology because God has become one with us in humanity and “God’s own self, God in God’s tripersonal life,... God in God’s eternal life, has taken us into this eternal life that is God’s own.”⁶¹² Conversely, this chapter aims to demonstrate that true anthropology is reliant upon theology. Marc Cortez defines a comprehensively Christological anthropology as “one in which (1) Christology warrants ultimate claims about true humanity such that (2) the scope of those claims applies to all anthropological data.”⁶¹³ In other words, we look through a “Christ-centred lens” to see what it means to be a person. This entails affirming two important truths: Jesus is human and Jesus reveals true humanity.⁶¹⁴ Thus, Christ is the one “in whom alone the meaning of personhood is fully revealed”.⁶¹⁵ We look specifically at the concept of Christological *kenosis* to explore what it is to be both human and Godlike.

Christological anthropology intersects with Trinitarian anthropology in the person of Christ. We embrace the social doctrine of the Trinity in this retrieval of a true appreciation of personhood. In agreement with Ury, and others, it will be argued that the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity provided the historical basis for a conception

⁶¹² Endean, ed., *Karl Rahner: Spiritual Writings*, 104-105.

⁶¹³ Cortez, *Christological Anthropology*, 225.

⁶¹⁴ Cortez, *Christological Anthropology*, 19.

⁶¹⁵ Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 127.

of person, properly understood. “[T]he trinitarian and christological controversies crystallized certain factors pertaining to personhood”.⁶¹⁶ We shall see that the notion of personhood, as derived from Christ and the Trinity, is far removed from modern rational individualism. When anthropology is seen through the lens of the Trinity, as Spaemann argues, “persons” are interconnected human beings. The term persons stems from the heart of Christian theology.⁶¹⁷ The goal of a biblical model of relationality is “a *reciprocating self* – fully and securely related to others and to God”.⁶¹⁸ First, it is pertinent to our wider discussion to consider a broader anthropology within the narrative of creation and salvation history.

The Nature of Humanity: Doctrines of Creation, Fall and *Imago Dei*

The creation of human beings is the climax of the first creation story, “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness’” (Genesis 1:26). The *imago Dei* is intrinsic to our being: “it is the whole person, embodied and breathed by God, that images God.”⁶¹⁹ The Hebrew term *nephesh* denoted the whole self, a unity of flesh and spirit.⁶²⁰ Precisely what *imago Dei* means in reality has been hotly debated among theologians, with views ranging from a spiritual/mental/emotional similarity with God, the rationality or “substantial” approach, to a more materialist, anthropomorphic understanding, to seeing human beings as God’s royal representatives on earth, in the manner that ancient kings erected statues resembling themselves, or even a combination of these positions.⁶²¹ Janet Soskice criticises the historical emphasis on rationality as the locus for the *imago Dei*. By itself it is inadequate. It neglects the Genesis emphasis on physicality and it individualizes, whereas the Genesis narrative calls for more than one human being to image the Creator God in humanity.⁶²² Accordingly, the view adopted here, in keeping with the direction of this chapter, is to interpret *imago Dei* in terms of our capacity for relationship with one another and God.

⁶¹⁶ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 14-15.

⁶¹⁷ Spaemann, *Persons*, 1-4, 15, 17.

⁶¹⁸ Balswick, King and Reimer, *The Reciprocating Self*, 9. Italics original.

⁶¹⁹ William Dyrness, “Poised between Life and Death,” in *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age*, ed. Jones and Barbeau, 49.

⁶²⁰ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 87.

⁶²¹ Catherine McDowell, “In the Image of God he Created Them,” 30-34 & Craig L. Blomberg, “True Righteousness and Holiness,” 68-72, in *Image of God*; Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, 221-235.

⁶²² Janet Soskice, “The God of Creative Address,” in *Image of God*, 189-201.

For Soskice, it is collectively as “speaking beings” that we most image the God of creative address. Speech is a social gift and involves the reciprocity of love.⁶²³ Catherine McDowell balances this horizontal standpoint with the vertical, making a solid case that to be created in God’s image is to be God’s kin or kind.⁶²⁴ The list of the descendants of Adam in Genesis chapter 5 begins by reiterating Genesis 1:26-27, that God created humankind in the likeness of God. Seth is then described as being in the image and likeness of his father, Adam. McDowell aligns creating with begetting: “the plain reading of the text suggests that Seth resembles his father simply because his father begat him. By analogy, humans correspond to God because God creates them.”⁶²⁵ Metaphorically speaking, to be created in the image of God is to be children of God, our Father.⁶²⁶ Ury observes that in the Old Testament, a person cannot be understood in isolation, all human life represented dependence on another, whether God or human. The *imago Dei* is defined “with ontological relatedness at its base.” Relationship is at the root of being created in the image of God.⁶²⁷ William Dyrness adds that to know and transcend oneself and respond appropriately to others entails an imaginative self-reflexivity. We are created in a dynamic set of relationships, reflecting God’s triunity.⁶²⁸

From a New Testament vantage-point, the image of God finds its true expression in Christ, “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). This supplements the Genesis understanding. Whilst humans are made in the image of God, we become more fully so as we grow in Christ: “all of us, with unveiled faces... are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18).⁶²⁹ We are formed into the image of Christ by the power of the Spirit.⁶³⁰ This work remains incomplete until the new creation: “By bearing the image of Christ who is fully God, we bear the image of God, which will be perfected in us in the eternal state.”⁶³¹ For Shults, this eschatological orientation is bound up with the doctrine of the Trinity: “Imaging God has to do with sharing in the mutual divine glorifying, which for us occurs only through union with the Son in the Spirit, that is, through spiritual intensification of filial identification.” Like Christ, we should not seek our own glory, but lay down our lives

⁶²³ Soskice, “Creative Address,” in *Image of God*, 195-201.

⁶²⁴ McDowell, “Image,” in *Image of God*, 35-42.

⁶²⁵ McDowell, “Image,” in *Image of God*, 35.

⁶²⁶ McDowell, “Image,” in *Image of God*, 38-40.

⁶²⁷ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 87-88.

⁶²⁸ Dyrness, “Poised,” in *Image of God*, 49-50.

⁶²⁹ Soskice, “Creative Address,” in *Image of God*, 191.

⁶³⁰ Dyrness, “Poised,” in *Image of God*, 56; Shults, *Anthropology*, 241.

⁶³¹ Blomberg, “Righteousness,” in *Image of God*, 77.

for the other.⁶³² In living the redeemed life, we seek to be true image-bearers in this broken world, by means of divine grace. Human endeavour is transformed as it participates in a righteousness not of its own.⁶³³

In a survey of Pauline texts on Christ as God's image, Craig Blomberg discerns an ethical/moral interpretation concerning the human embodiment of *imago Dei*. The result of being clothed with the new self, "which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:9-10), should be a holy and righteous life.⁶³⁴ This is not at odds with a relational understanding since our conduct affects our relationships. "Love (or mercy) and justice, the communicable attributes of God, thus summarize the heart of the *imago*."⁶³⁵ In similar vein, Shults finds the phrase "image of God" apt, combining all the intuitions that the nature of humanity must be ultimately understood in terms of an intrinsic orientation to life with God in the Spirit, disclosed in Christ, and that human goodness is tied up with responsible stewardship of its solidarity with other creatures.⁶³⁶ Balswick et al. argue for an understanding of the image of God "that enables us to participate in the life of the triune God and become more Christlike. From this standpoint the image of God is not only dynamic, but it is directional."⁶³⁷

Christ restores the divine image in us and its original purpose, marred by the Fall. The doctrine of creation informs us that the world comes from the free act of God: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). The Fall reveals a truth about human nature. Rod Garner writes: "As an archetype or symbol of what it means to be fearfully human, Adam comes to us as the first 'theological human'... he stands for all of us... one who reflects the riddle of our lives since the historical emergence of consciousness and the moral capacity for good or evil."⁶³⁸ Whether Adam and Eve are construed as symbolic or historical figures, their disobedience is seen, in one way, as representing the sin of every human heart, the egotistical sin of pride, setting ourselves up as gods. The human race displaced God from the centre of the universe. According to Gunton, and others, idolatry is at the heart

⁶³² Shults, *Anthropology*, 241.

⁶³³ Shults, *Anthropology*, 216.

⁶³⁴ Blomberg, "Righteousness," in *Image of God*, 76-87.

⁶³⁵ Blomberg, "Righteousness," in *Image of God*, 85.

⁶³⁶ Shults, *Anthropology*, 217-218.

⁶³⁷ Balswick, King and Reimer, *The Reciprocating Self*, 55.

⁶³⁸ Rod Garner, "Raising up the Old Adam in us All," *Church Times*, December 19/26, 2014.

of defacing the divine image.⁶³⁹ Zizioulas attributes the Fall to “the claim of created man to be the ultimate point of reference in existence (to be God)... viewed from the point of view of ontology, *the fall consists in the refusal to make being dependent on communion*”.⁶⁴⁰ Human beings are intended to mirror the self-giving mutual relations within the Godhead, but that ideal is distorted by sin. The severance in the primal relationship disrupts all relationships: with God, fellow humans, the created order and within oneself. Thus, there are two conflicting urges in life: one towards selfhood, individualism and separation; the other towards escape from the loneliness of self into something bigger, originating from humanity’s sharing in the divine life.⁶⁴¹ Regarding people as inherently and wholly bad loses sight of our being made in the image of God. The doctrine of original sin, the notion that all humans are bound by sin, which Augustine developed in his theory of inherited sin, should be balanced with the doctrine of original goodness.⁶⁴² Under the condition of sin we are still image-bearers, although the image of God is distorted.⁶⁴³

Hauerwas notes, “We only learn what our sin is as we discover our true identity through locating the self in God’s life as revealed to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁴⁴ The everyday reality of the doctrine of original sin is that humans are liable to self-centredness, often causing harm to others. We are incapable of changing fundamentally through our own efforts; we are dependent upon divine action. Christ enables humans to be redirected back to God. “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22) Shults writes, “the material history of the Incarnation of the Logos... discloses the ultimate relational unity of the divine and human”.⁶⁴⁵ A Christian anthropology presents Christ as the transformer of human identity. The doctrine of regeneration by the Spirit of Christ of the individual identity in Christ is the ultimate fulfilment of the human yearning for transformation.⁶⁴⁶

Locating this within the wider narrative of this thesis, the ego development/denial debate, calls for clarity on what it means for a person’s ego-identity. Shults explains that before the Spirit gives new life it “negates the ego-controlled sinful nature of the ‘flesh’

⁶³⁹ Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, 104-105.

⁶⁴⁰ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 102. Italics original.

⁶⁴¹ Happold, *Mysticism*, 40.

⁶⁴² Shults, *Anthropology*, 190-197.

⁶⁴³ Jones and Barbeau, “Introduction,” in *Image of God*, 11.

⁶⁴⁴ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 31.

⁶⁴⁵ Shults, *Anthropology*, 88.

⁶⁴⁶ Shults, *Anthropology*, 78-79.

that is bound by sin. Only after dying to sin and to self is the Christian freed to new life.”⁶⁴⁷ This is not tantamount to annihilation of self. To make this clear, Shults reframes it in terms of the philosophical-anthropological concept of “exocentricity”. To be a self involves being centred outside oneself through knowing and being known by the other, whilst being centrally organized by the agency of the ego. Self-identity includes awareness of what I am not, as well as my relation to others. In knowing and being known by Christ, where the not-I is the presence of the Spirit, my identity as a self is transformed and inverted, newly composed by the Eternal not-I, who cancels my compulsion to create my own ultimate identity through the ego.⁶⁴⁸ In Jungian terms, it is the God-image at the centre of the Self, not the ego, which is the instrument of transformation. As Balwick et al. verify, being conformed to Christ does not entail the dissolving of our self. The self is distinctively maintained in relationship with Christ in the process of being transformed. We become more like Christ as our unique selves.⁶⁴⁹

Rahner emphasises that God has created us out of nothing to be in partnership with God: “God has given us a freedom so that we can really and truly be God’s partners in God’s presence.”⁶⁵⁰ The purpose of human existence is a life “shared with the Word made human.”⁶⁵¹ In this respect, God needs humanity; the Word become human is orientated towards his human companions and the whole human race is centred on Christ as the core of its meaning. In the historical life of Jesus, God’s innerness has been opened to us. To become part of his life is to become part of the eternal inner-divine life.⁶⁵² Thus, “grace, the drawing of our being into the innerness of the divine life, is not an abstract, arbitrary divinization,” but “a concrete assimilation to Christ, a becoming part of *his* life.”⁶⁵³ We are drawn into the life of Jesus by the very fact of his incarnation, life and death; the whole world is shaped by Jesus’ existence. It is the essential orientation of the life of each one of us.⁶⁵⁴ Even if we reject this call personally, “it remains the most central constituent of our humanity.”⁶⁵⁵ Ultimately, the call to follow Christ “is the necessary unfolding of what we are in ourselves and always have been: those who are

⁶⁴⁷ Shults, *Anthropology*, 89.

⁶⁴⁸ Shults, *Anthropology*, 90-91.

⁶⁴⁹ Balwick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 34,333.

⁶⁵⁰ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 104.

⁶⁵¹ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 111.

⁶⁵² Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 111-112.

⁶⁵³ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 112. Italics original.

⁶⁵⁴ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 113.

⁶⁵⁵ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 114.

destined in the deepest part of our being for life with Christ.”⁶⁵⁶ According to Rahner, then, relationship with Christ, and with the Triune God, is intrinsic to human nature and a fundamental aspect of human relationships. We turn now to focus upon differing understandings of divine *kenosis*.

Personhood as Self-Giving: Christological *Kenosis*

The word *kenosis* is a transliteration of the Greek noun meaning “emptying”.⁶⁵⁷ It comes from the description of Christ in Philippians 2:7, ἐαυτον εκένωσε, “emptied himself”. Modern kenoticists interpret this in the specific sense that in the incarnation, the divine *Logos* voluntarily emptied itself, gave up or abstained from the use of certain divine attributes. They generally understand this to be a temporary divestment of powers for the duration of Christ’s earthly life.⁶⁵⁸ Oliver Crisp makes the distinction between “ontological” and “functional” approaches. The former is to do with the being of Christ: in the incarnation the Word abdicates certain divine properties. The latter view puts the emphasis upon the functions Christ performs, that the Word still retained his divine properties but did not exercise certain of them for a period of time, typically from conception until the ascension.⁶⁵⁹ Kenotic Christology emerged distinctively in the nineteenth century as an attempt to reconcile the historical Jesus with the classical doctrine of the Trinity and the eternal, pre-existence of the Son.⁶⁶⁰ The literal interpretation of modern kenoticists is challenged by other interpretations of scripture.

Sarah Coakley charges the “new kenoticism” with appearing to make God weak and limited, endangering the capacity for divine transformative power, and failing to consider “the possibility of a ‘strength made perfect *in* human weakness’ (2 Corinthians 12:9), of the normative concurrence in Christ of non-bullying divine ‘power’ *with* ‘self-effaced’ humanity.”⁶⁶¹ For Coakley power and vulnerability go hand in hand. She offers a defence of *kenosis*, which “embraces the spiritual paradoxes of ‘losing one’s life in order to save it’.”⁶⁶² Likewise, Richard Bauckham argues that self-giving is integral to God’s nature; the incarnation is not a disinvestment of the divine nature but an expression of it. Christology is at its most profound when the divine identity includes

⁶⁵⁶ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 116.

⁶⁵⁷ Hughes, *The True Image*, 233.

⁶⁵⁸ Stephen Davis, “Is Kenosis Orthodox?,” in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, ed. C. Stephen Evans, 113.

⁶⁵⁹ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 119-120.

⁶⁶⁰ Thomas Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology,” in *Kenotic Christology*, 74-77.

⁶⁶¹ Coakley, *Powers and Submissions*, 30-31.

⁶⁶² Coakley, *Powers*, 4.

both exalted and crucified Christ; “when the Christological pattern of humiliation and exaltation is recognised as revelatory of God”.⁶⁶³ This line of argument will be pursued, but first we will paint some background to the new kenoticism, beginning with the New Testament.

Philippians 2:5-8 is seen as the foundational text for the origins of kenotic Christology. These verses are generally believed to be an early hymn about Christ,⁶⁶⁴ which Paul has imported into his letter:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied (εκένωσεν) himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Paul urges the Philippians to have the same mindset as Christ. Gordon Fee suggests that Paul essentially makes two points: as God, he emptied himself by becoming human and as a human he humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death. In this way he demonstrated God-likeness (over/against “selfish ambition”) by assuming the form of a slave and he demonstrated true humanity (over/against “vain conceit”) by humbling himself in obedience all the way to the cross.⁶⁶⁵ The verb at stake for kenoticists is *εκένωσεν*, “emptied”, whether it is to be taken literally or understood metaphorically. Ontological kenoticists assert that Christ literally emptied himself of divine attributes in becoming incarnate. Stephen Davis favours this line, claiming that the verb requires a direct or indirect object: “any vessel that is ‘emptied’... must be emptied ‘of’ something.”⁶⁶⁶ This may be true conceptually, but not grammatically, since “empty”, being an ergative verb, can express a “middle voice”.

Fee argues, on the basis of the parallel structure of the two sentences in verses 6-8, that the verbs are likely to carry the same sense in both instances, so they are best understood as having a modal relationship to the main verb in each case. The way

⁶⁶³ Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 46.

⁶⁶⁴ Hawthorne, *Word Biblical Commentary: Philippians*, 77.

⁶⁶⁵ Gordon Fee, “The New Testament and Kenosis Christology,” in *Kenotic Christology*, 30.

⁶⁶⁶ Davis, “Is Kenosis Orthodox?,” 131-132.

Christ emptied himself and humbled himself was by “becoming human” and “becoming obedient”. In which case, it would seem likely that the verb is intended as a powerful metaphor to express “what Christ did ‘as God’.” By comparison, 2 Corinthians 8:9, “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich”, echoing the general tenor of Philippians, is seen as obviously metaphorical.⁶⁶⁷ Fee concludes: “I for one have some difficulty with the language of *kenosis* when applied to Christ in his Incarnation, if by that, on the basis of *this* text, we mean that the Son ‘emptied himself of anything’ in his becoming human.”⁶⁶⁸ In variance to the NRSV, the NIV, KJV and Living Bible, translate ἐκένωσεν in Philippians 2:7 as “humbled” himself. Thus, *kenosis* can be identified with humble service. The notion of humbling becomes synonymous with emptying, understood in a metaphorical sense.

An alternative “Adam Christology” interpretation of this passage, proposed by J. D. G. Dunn, sees Christ as the second Adam: what the first Adam failed to do, the second accomplishes.⁶⁶⁹ As a “Christology from below”, it rules out pre-existent son ideas and is not equitable with a kenotic line of argument in the modern sense.⁶⁷⁰ Coakley favours this non-pre-existent “ethical” interpretation of Philippians 2:5-11, based upon Dunn’s Adam typology. For Coakley, “the ‘emptying’ of v.7 is *parallel* to the ‘humbling’ of v.8; both take place within Jesus’ earthly existence, rather than the ‘emptying’ being a precondition of the earthly life”.⁶⁷¹ Whilst adhering to Dunn’s position, Coakley gives credence to C. F. D. Moule’s “artful” reworking of the ethical interpretation, which remains committed to Christ’s pre-existence and full divinity. In keeping with other ethical accounts, Moule does not see the emptying as effecting Christ’s divinity, but pertains to his human non-grasping nature which is a distinctively divine characteristic: “Jesus’ ‘emptying’ is seen not just as the blueprint for a perfect human moral response, but as revelatory of the ‘humility’ of the *divine* nature. As Moule puts it: ‘...Jesus displayed the self-giving humility which is the *essence of divinity*’.”⁶⁷²

Bauckham offers a further take on Philippians 2:5-11, which he regards as penned by Paul as a deeply insightful interpretation of Deutero-Isaiah’s suffering servant. Jesus is

⁶⁶⁷ Fee, “New Testament,” 33.

⁶⁶⁸ Fee, “New Testament,” 34. Italics original.

⁶⁶⁹ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 114ff.

⁶⁷⁰ See Fee, “New Testament,” 30-32 for a fuller examination.

⁶⁷¹ Coakley, *Powers*, 6-8. Italics original.

⁶⁷² Coakley, *Powers*, 10. Italics original.

the Servant of the Lord. Following the structure of Isaiah 53, “*because* the Servant humiliated himself, *therefore* God exalted him.” Essentially, “the career of the Servant of the Lord, his suffering, humiliation, death and exaltation, is the way in which the sovereignty of the one true God comes to be acknowledged by all the nations.”⁶⁷³ The pre-existent Christ did not consider his equality with God “something to be used for his own advantage” but “as something he could express in service, obedience, self-renunciation and self-humiliation for others.”⁶⁷⁴ The emptying is the self-renunciation, in service and obedience, from the incarnation through to death. Bauckham identifies the central themes of the passage as the relation between high and low status; service and lordship.

[T]he issue is not seen in terms of a contrast between divine and human natures. The question is not: how can the infinite God become a finite creature... the question is rather one of status. Can the one who inhabits the heights of heaven, high on his throne above all creation, come down not merely to the human level, but even to the ultimate degradation: death on a cross?⁶⁷⁵

The self-humiliation and obedience are the “repudiation of status... the voluntary descent to the place furthest removed from the heavenly throne”.⁶⁷⁶ The Philippians passage provides a fundamental Christological statement on the identity of God: “who God is – is revealed as much in self-abasement and service as it is in exaltation and rule. The God who is high can also be low, because God is God not in seeking his own advantage but in self-giving... Only the Servant can also be the Lord.”⁶⁷⁷

The letter to the Hebrews is also particularly rich in kenotic language: “we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour” (2:9). Also, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.” (4:15) Fee stresses that, on the one hand the author is keen to express Christ’s deity and his absolute supremacy over all things and on the other hand, the absolute reality of Christ’s incarnation.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷³ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 59-60. Italics original.

⁶⁷⁴ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 57-58.

⁶⁷⁵ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 60-61.

⁶⁷⁶ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 61.

⁶⁷⁷ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 61.

⁶⁷⁸ Fee, “New Testament,” 35.

In the synoptic gospels, Jesus is portrayed as a truly human figure, totally dependent upon God his Father and the Spirit. He is frequently engaged in prayer to sustain these enabling relationships (Mark 1:35). Jesus is not characterised as omniscient, either in infancy or adulthood, depicted as growing in wisdom and understanding (Luke 2:51-52) and not knowing when the end times would be (Mark 13:32). Fee identifies Luke's gospel as presenting the most thorough-going picture of a 'kenotic' Jesus, beginning with establishing Jesus' divine origins right at the outset with the story of the virgin birth.⁶⁷⁹ The conclusion to John's prologue (1:14) clearly establishes that the eternal *Logos* became fully human. John's narrative is peppered with illustrations of Jesus' humanity: his family origins were accounted for (1:45-46; 6:42), he grew tired (4:6), he wept at the graveside of a friend (11:35). Jesus also engages in humble service, epitomised in the foot washing at the Last Supper. At the same time, John is clear that the truly human one has come from the father and will return to him.⁶⁸⁰ Before his passion Jesus prays: "Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed" (John 17:5). The kenoticist philosopher of religion Stephen Davis takes this to indicate that Jesus once had divine glory and will have again but does not have it at the present moment.⁶⁸¹ This deduction does not sit easily with the view, explored later, that the cross is the supreme moment of glorification for John.

Stephen Davis is at pains to prove that kenotic theory fits with the "two natures" Chalcedonian definition. For Davis, the key lies in the distinction between essential and contingent properties. His kenotic theory of the incarnation runs along the following lines: Jesus Christ was "in the form of God" as the *Logos* and at a certain point in human history he voluntarily "emptied himself" of the divine glory and of certain other divine properties inconsistent with humanity. He then took on "human form", assuming sufficient human properties to be truly human, while retaining sufficient divine properties to remain truly divine but "he did not assume those common human properties that are inconsistent with being truly divine".⁶⁸² Davis thus makes a distinction between what God can do as God and what God can do as a human being. Squaring this with Chalcedon, he asserts: "Jesus Christ has some properties *as* God and some *as* a human being. The Chalcedonic Definition itself seems to imply something of

⁶⁷⁹ Fee, "New Testament," 38.

⁶⁸⁰ Fee, "New Testament," 41.

⁶⁸¹ Davis, "Is Kenosis Orthodox?," 132.

⁶⁸² Davis, "Is Kenosis Orthodox?," 115, 117-118.

the sort: ‘of one substance with the Father *as regards his Godhead*, and at the same time of one substance with us *as regards his manhood*’”.⁶⁸³ Davis’ claims to orthodoxy are not convincing. Firstly, the statement about certain “common human properties” not being assumed calls to mind Gregory of Nazianzus’ stern refute of Apollinarianism: “That which he has not assumed, he has not healed”.⁶⁸⁴ Secondly, as Oliver Crisp observes, it is very difficult to know where to draw the line between what constitutes contingent and essential divine properties.⁶⁸⁵ Thirdly, it goes against the notion of divine immutability.⁶⁸⁶ On the surface of it, no mention is made in the Chalcedonian Creed of the divine *Logos* becoming limited or being “emptied” of any divine properties.

The German theologian Gottfried Thomasius (1802-75) was the first to articulate the new kenoticism in a systematic fashion. His statement on the person of Christ was heralded as the “classic form of the Kenotic theory”.⁶⁸⁷ For Thomasius, maintaining all three of the “basic pillars” of Christology: true deity, true humanity and the real unity of Christ’s person, required a self-limitation of the divine.⁶⁸⁸ Thomasius was clear that the kenosis of the divine *Logos* consists in “a divesting of the divine mode of being”. The *Logos* is reduced to a human form of existence,⁶⁸⁹ putting his kenosis firmly in the ontological camp. Thomasius insisted that the divinity of the Incarnate *Logos* was in no way diminished by distinguishing between unessential “relative” divine properties (omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence), relinquished to a state of potency during the incarnation, and “immanent” properties (truth, holiness and love), essential to the deity and retained by the Son in his incarnate state.⁶⁹⁰

Thomasius’ theory was soon followed by others, keen to correct perceived deficiencies in his argument. Wolfgang Friedrich Gess (1819-91) represents the more extreme end of ontological kenoticism: the relinquishing of all divine attributes in the incarnation. As a human soul, the Son gains consciousness of his divine identity and mission only through the course of human development and a life lived in complete dependence upon

⁶⁸³ Davis, “Is Kenosis Orthodox?,” 119. Italics original.

⁶⁸⁴ Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 98.

⁶⁸⁵ Crisp, *Divinity*, 132.

⁶⁸⁶ Crisp, *Divinity*, 126, 132.

⁶⁸⁷ Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century,” 78-79.

⁶⁸⁸ Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century,” 78; Coakley, *Powers*, 18.

⁶⁸⁹ Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century,” 81-82.

⁶⁹⁰ Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century,” 82-83; Coakley, *Powers*, 19.

God the Father and the Spirit.⁶⁹¹ J. H. August Ebrard (1818-88) interpreted Christ's kenosis as an exchange of his pre-existent eternal form for a temporal one. The incarnate *Logos* retains all his divine attributes but they are only available to him in proportion to the human mode of existence, for example, being able to work miracles within his own sphere of influence.⁶⁹² Bishop H. Martensen of Denmark (1808-84) made a distinction between "Logos revelation" and "Christ revelation". As the world-*Logos*, the Son's revelation is everywhere present. In the incarnation, that revelation is supplemented by the *Logos* becoming human. The *kenosis* consists in the self-limitation of the *Logos* in the man Jesus as the Christ revelation: the revelation of the *Logos* in limited human form. At the same time his revelation in nature is not diminished; the *Logos* lives a double life.⁶⁹³

The debate on the continent was followed by a second wave of English kenoticists in the early twentieth century: Frank Weston, Charles Gore and P.T. Forsyth.⁶⁹⁴ Hugh Ross Mackintosh (1870-1936) rounded up the debate. Mackintosh was modestly sympathetic with Thomasius, contending that God's display of love can only be truly appreciated by a kenotic model of Christ.⁶⁹⁵ Mackintosh asserted that the substance of his Christology had the same meaning as Chalcedon but in a different form. He maintained that his four non-negotiable axioms - i) the deity of Christ; ii) his personal pre-existence; iii) his true humanity; and iv) the unity of his person - can only be held together coherently by assuming real divine *kenosis*.⁶⁹⁶ Mackintosh stresses that the notion of the pre-existence of Christ crops up repeatedly in scripture. He cites Philippians 2:5-8 and 2 Corinthians 8:9 (both quoted earlier) as primary examples. Mackintosh concludes that the love embodied and conveyed in Christ was so great, "whose glory must be sacrificed or laid aside ere Christ's earthly career had its beginning."⁶⁹⁷ Despite this, the earthly Jesus had an "absorbing consciousness of himself... of God and himself as bound up together."⁶⁹⁸ This is revealed in two aspects: his messianic role, in which he chose the cross, and as Son of God, which inspired his life-work.⁶⁹⁹ Mackintosh disputes Thomasius' distinction between relative and

⁶⁹¹ Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century," 87.

⁶⁹² Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century," 86.

⁶⁹³ Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century," 86-87.

⁶⁹⁴ Coakley, *Powers*, 19-21.

⁶⁹⁵ Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century," 88ff.

⁶⁹⁶ Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century," 91.

⁶⁹⁷ Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 61-62.

⁶⁹⁸ Mackintosh, *Christ*, 8.

⁶⁹⁹ Mackintosh, *Christ*, 9-24.

immanent divine attributes, considering all the omni-attributes as essential to divinity, despite the lack of evidence in the gospels that Jesus possessed such maximal attributes. He resolved the apparent conflict by suggesting a “transposition of divine attributes from a state of actuality to that of potency”,⁷⁰⁰ which he struggles to illustrate. It is hard to see how this differs from Thomasius’ solution for the relative divine properties. What is clear is that Mackintosh was not saying that the kenotic Christ merely refrained from using the divine attributes.⁷⁰¹

It is evident that these kenoticists had their work cut out in articulating divine self-limitation within an Alexandrian interpretation of Chalcedon, which placed an emphasis on the divinity of Christ. The kenotic movement gradually waned as it was attacked from the orthodox right and liberal left, the main complaint of the former being that it did not adequately account for the deity of the incarnate Christ.⁷⁰² Recently, however, there has been a kenotic resurgence among a small group of theologians and philosophers of religion, including Hans Urs von Balthasar, Stephen Davis, Thomas Thompson, Ronald Feenstra and Stephen Evans.⁷⁰³ Rather than pursue these further, we return to Richard Bauckham to investigate *kenosis* as self-giving humility.

Bauckham shows how God’s unique identity in Jesus is made known in the passion. In the fourth gospel, unlike in Philippians, the emphasis is not on exaltation after humiliation but for John the exaltation of the Servant of which Isaiah 52:13 speaks is “the whole sequence of humiliation, suffering, death and vindication beyond death... The Servant is exalted and glorified in and through his humiliation and suffering.”⁷⁰⁴ Bauckham draws attention to John’s repeated passion predictions which state that the Son of Man must be “lifted up”. This carries a double meaning: it refers both to the crucifixion as a literal physical lifting up of Jesus from the earth and figuratively as his elevation towards heaven as the place of divine sovereignty over the cosmos. “*When* Jesus is lifted up, exalted in his humiliation on the cross, *then* the unique divine identity (‘I am he’) will be revealed”.⁷⁰⁵ In sayings such as, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” (12:23) which refer to Jesus’ death as his glorification, John’s use

⁷⁰⁰ Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century,” 92.

⁷⁰¹ Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century,” 93.

⁷⁰² Stephen Evans, “Understanding Jesus the Christ as Human and Divine,” 4 & Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century,” 95-96, in *Kenotic Christology*.

⁷⁰³ Davis, “Is Kenosis Orthodox?,” 114-115.

⁷⁰⁴ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 64.

⁷⁰⁵ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 65-66. Italics original.

of “glorified” relates to the heavenly splendour which other New Testament texts associate with the exalted Christ.⁷⁰⁶ Furthermore, John’s whole passion narrative simultaneously fuses the two themes of lordship and servanthood: “Jesus is the king in humility (at the entry into Jerusalem), the king in humiliation (before Pilate and on the cross), and the king in death”.⁷⁰⁷ Thus, Bauckham demonstrates that self-emptying need not entail giving up divine properties, rather, that the crucified Jesus belongs to the very identity of God:

Here God is seen to be God in his radical self-giving, descending to the most abject human condition, and in that human obedience, humiliation, suffering and death, being no less truly God than he is in his cosmic rule and glory on the heavenly throne. It is not that God is manifest in heavenly glory and hidden in the human degradation of the cross. The latter makes known who God is no less than the former does.... In this act of self-giving God is most truly himself and defines himself for the world.⁷⁰⁸

The misplaced supposition of modern kenoticists that Christ had to rid himself of his divinity and power to become human, that he became who he was not, that is, just a good man, falls prey to the heresy of Ebionism. In addition, such a *kenosis* expresses the view that to serve others is to abandon yourself. On the contrary, dying to self is not about self-rejection but self-giving. By emptying himself in humility, by giving himself in love, Christ affirms his divinity. Self-giving is characteristic of the Godhead. It is essential to the divine nature. As asserted by Karl Barth, “God is always God even in His humiliation. The divine being does not suffer any change, any diminution, any transformation into something else”.⁷⁰⁹ Christ exercised divine authority through servant leadership. It is in service to others that Christ is supremely Himself. This is the personhood that Christ exemplifies. As Rahner affirms, Christ “becomes what he is meant to be in his humanity, in a true historical presence, only... through his being our brother and affirming our validity as others.”⁷¹⁰ Likewise, in imitating Christ, we find our authentic selves by acknowledging the “otherness” of and serving others.⁷¹¹ People “find their own selves by serving... losing oneself in the service of others. Since this love seeks not self but God, and God’s world”.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁶ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 66.

⁷⁰⁷ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 67.

⁷⁰⁸ Bauckham, *Crucified*, 68-69.

⁷⁰⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4/1, 179-180.

⁷¹⁰ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 117.

⁷¹¹ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 117-118.

⁷¹² Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 60.

Rahner proclaims that without ceasing to be God, God makes a gift of self to the world. Love is possible only within the self-emptying of divine love into the world, “because God has descended into the world. From that it follows that our ‘ascending’ love to God is always a participation in God’s descent to the world.”⁷¹³ The “descending love” of God means a “divinized world and Church.”⁷¹⁴ *Kenosis* and self-giving, are essential to church and community life. According to Rowan Williams, Maximus the Confessor taught that human beings are “called to share in Christ’s human *kenosis*, responding to the divine *kenosis*... ‘By the *kenosis* of the passions, a man may make the divine life his own’.” Humans are destined to become by grace what God is by nature, achieved by the indwelling of the Spirit.⁷¹⁵ The modern mystic Cynthia Bourgeault cites *kenosis* as the route by which Jesus makes “a radical shift in consciousness: away from the alienation and polarization of the egoic operating system and into the unified field of divine abundance that can be perceived only through the heart.”⁷¹⁶ Bourgeault observes that in every life circumstance Jesus always responded with the same motion of self-emptying, or descent, “taking the lower place, not the higher.” She notes how spiritually counterintuitive this is; for most spiritual seekers the way to God is by ascent.⁷¹⁷ However, as Rahner spells out, the Christian who participates in God’s loving descent toward the world can love in a radical way that would not otherwise be possible.⁷¹⁸ Bourgeault concludes:

There is another route to center: a more reckless path and extravagant path, which is attained not through storing up that energy... but through... giving it all away. The unitive point is reached not through the concentration of being but through the free squandering of it; not through acquisition or attainment but through self-emptying; not though “up” but through “down.” This is the way of *kenosis*, the revolutionary path that Jesus introduced into the consciousness of the West.⁷¹⁹

Colin Gunton widens the picture: “the self emptying of the eternal Son in the incarnation and passion is an expression of the love of the triune God worked out in the structures of fallen time and space.”⁷²⁰ According to Mark MacIntosh, von Balthasar concurs that Jesus’ self-offering upon the cross, his loving self-emptying, springs from a greater eternal self-sharing. It is the visible historical form of an eternal Trinitarian

⁷¹³ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 57.

⁷¹⁴ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 58.

⁷¹⁵ Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge*, 122-123.

⁷¹⁶ Bourgeault, *The Wisdom of Jesus*, 62.

⁷¹⁷ Bourgeault, *Wisdom*, 64.

⁷¹⁸ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 59.

⁷¹⁹ Bourgeault, *Wisdom*, 66.

⁷²⁰ Gunton, *Creation*, 88.

giving way to the Other that is the very constitution of God's self-giving life: "the 'primal kenosis' of the Trinity 'makes possible all other kenotic movements of God into the world'." ⁷²¹ So, we now shift from a Christological to a Trinitarian anthropology.

Personhood as Reciprocity: The Social Model of the Trinity

The social, or communitarian, doctrine of the Trinity bestows a robust model for a Trinitarian anthropology and has profound implications for an understanding of personhood. We shall trace its origins and engage with some advocates and critics, although it is not possible to cover the whole field of Trinitarian debate. Predominantly, we will draw upon the social Trinitarians Jürgen Moltmann, John Zizioulas, Tom Smail, M. William Ury and Catherine Mowry LaCugna. The notion that God is both one and three is a paradox that has occupied theologians for centuries. The Early Church worshipped the Trinity long before the formulation of a Trinitarian doctrine of God. ⁷²² The doxological and exegetical practices of the Early Church called for a doctrine of God that incorporated Jesus and the Holy Spirit. ⁷²³ Ury, among others, highlights the persistence of two common heresies: tri-theism and modalism. The former view leads to three individual gods and the charge of autonomous individualism. The latter view derives from Sabellius, who argued that God comes to us in different forms at different times, like an actor with three different masks. God is ontologically one but functionally Father, Son and Spirit. Subsequently, the distinctiveness of the three disintegrates into mere aspects of the one. ⁷²⁴

As the church battled to define the parameters of belief, the doctrine of the Trinity was articulated against the double heresy of tri-theism and modalism. According to Ury, and other social Trinitarians, the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa) engaged in the realm of Greek metaphysics to arrive at an ingenious solution to how God can, at the same time, have one essence and be three distinct persons. ⁷²⁵ The social Trinitarian interpretation of the Greek Fathers has been historically brought into question by a growing body of literature by theologians such as Holmes ⁷²⁶ and Coakley, who will be touched upon. Nevertheless, social trinitarianism, whether or not it is entirely faithful to the Patristics, is still favoured for

⁷²¹ MacIntosh, "Christology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs Von Balthasar*, 34.

⁷²² Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 52-58.

⁷²³ Holmes, *Trinity*, 55.

⁷²⁴ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 17, 72, 98; Moltman, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 17-19.

⁷²⁵ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 67-68, 79, 112-113.

⁷²⁶ Holmes, *Trinity*, 2, 21-22.

the trajectory of this thesis. The persuasion is that the Cappadocians devised a new ontology, centred on personhood, which revolutionised the philosophical and theological worlds.⁷²⁷ It upended the prevailing Platonic philosophy, in which “person” was not endowed with permanence since the soul was not united permanently to the individual.⁷²⁸ *Prosopon*, or *persona*, meant a mask that could be changed; an addendum to someone’s existence that had no bearing on one’s true *hypostasis* (substance/nature). There was no sense of the uniqueness of the individual person; persons were attributes of the *polis*. The era could be described as “pre-personal”.⁷²⁹ By contrast, the terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* (substance or essence) were ontological categories. Meanwhile, the church recognised Father, Son and Spirit as three fixed co-existent beings of the one God, not as roles or masks. LaCugna expounds the situation as follows:

The basic formula of trinitarian doctrine achieved by the end of the fourth century, that God exists as three persons in one nature (*mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*), expresses compactly... what Christian theologians had concluded about the nature of *theologia*: The divine *ousia* exists as three distinct *hypostases*. God exists as Father, Son, Spirit. This Trinitarian ontology is rooted in the self-revelation of God in the economy, in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit.⁷³⁰

It is maintained that the Cappadocian Fathers established an ontological foundation by changing the term person from being movable to constant. They arrived at a unity of person with being by distinguishing *hypostasis* (a metaphysical term for an independent object with ontological weight) from *ousia* and attaching it to *prosopon*. Previously, *ousia* and *hypostasis* had been used interchangeably, meaning that which exists substantially. Now the Cappadocians brought about a clear distinction between the two.⁷³¹ Zizioulas explains that by means of this interchange the term *hypostasis* became relational and the term *prosopon* became ontological. *Hypostasis* and *prosopon* became synonymous for “person”. God is of one substance, *ousia*, and three *hypostasis*; a divine nature and also eternally Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God can “be” and “be in relation” at one and the same time. “*To be* and *to be in relation* becomes identical.”⁷³² Or, as Ury puts it, *hypostasis* and *prosopon* are entities “undiscernible apart from communion.”⁷³³ Ury adds the divine persons are not just relations but “equally substantial

⁷²⁷ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 103.

⁷²⁸ Zizioulas, *Being*, 28.

⁷²⁹ Zizioulas, *Being*, 32-33; Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 68-69; 81-84.

⁷³⁰ LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, 54.

⁷³¹ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 66-67.

⁷³² Zizioulas, *Being*, 35-39, 87-88. Italics and grammar original.

⁷³³ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 122.

subsistents.”⁷³⁴ The distinctiveness of the three is distinguished by their relations of origin. The Father is the source of the Godhead from which the eternal Son and co-equal Spirit draw their existence. The Father is ungenerate and is the one, who out of love, begets the Son and spirates the Spirit.⁷³⁵ The social doctrine of the Trinity begins with the three but sustains the unity of the Trinity by the three persons, or centres of consciousness, remaining in unbroken relational communion. The very ground of being is personal: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is one by virtue of a common essence. Thus, as Spaemann attests, Christian orthodoxy settled on the formula “One being, three persons”. The persons have their reality in self-giving and self-receiving.⁷³⁶

The German theologian Jürgen Moltmann shares the conviction about divine self-giving. Moltmann’s doctrine of God evolved throughout his works, reaching maturity in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*,⁷³⁷ which will be our focus. He starts with “the history of Jesus the Son” to develop his historical/social doctrine of the Trinity,⁷³⁸ based upon the New Testament proclamation of the relationships of fellowship of the Father, Son and Spirit, which are open to the world.⁷³⁹ In the Synoptic gospels, Jesus’ messianic call begins with his baptism in the Spirit of God. John and Paul go back further to the Father sending the Son into the world, arising from the Trinitarian differentiation of God’s unity; “God differentiates himself from himself and yields himself up.”⁷⁴⁰ In a profound community of will, the Father lets the Son surrender himself through the Spirit; the Holy Spirit remains the link in separation. The loving surrender of the Son by the Father gives and suffers everything for lost humanity. Hence, Moltmann deduces, “God is self-giving.”⁷⁴¹ The cross shows a pain in God which can be understood only in Trinitarian terms. God is forsaken by God: “In giving up his own Son, God cuts himself off from himself and sacrifices his own self.”⁷⁴²

The cross remains central in Moltmann’s doctrine of God, which stands in continuity with, and takes as its starting point, his earlier work *The Crucified God*.⁷⁴³ Holmes and Bauckham observe that Moltman’s preoccupation with theodicy leads to dubious

⁷³⁴ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 125.

⁷³⁵ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 105,108,123.

⁷³⁶ Spaemann, *Persons*, 26-27.

⁷³⁷ Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, 91.

⁷³⁸ Moltman, *Trinity*, 19.

⁷³⁹ Moltman, *Trinity*, 64.

⁷⁴⁰ Moltman, *Trinity*, 65-75.

⁷⁴¹ Moltman, *Trinity*, 75-83.

⁷⁴² Moltman, *Trinity*, 83.

⁷⁴³ Holmes, *Trinity*, 20-21.

assertions about the Trinity: “the Son’s sacrifice of boundless love on Golgotha is from eternity already included in the exchange of the essential, the consubstantial love which constitutes the divine life of the Trinity”, and “[t]he pain of the cross determines the inner life of the triune God from eternity to eternity.”⁷⁴⁴ This implies that the Trinity is contingent upon the cross.⁷⁴⁵ The sufferings of the cross and some form of evil become essential to who God is and eternalises God’s temporal experience.⁷⁴⁶ These are valid criticisms which remain unresolved, but Moltmann attempts to temper the dominance of the cross by proclaiming the eternal effects of “the joy of responsive love” on the inner life of the Trinity, which provides a more hopeful orientation.⁷⁴⁷

The resurrection is also seen in Trinitarian terms. The Father raises the Son and enthrones him as Lord through the Spirit. Then, the risen Son sends the Spirit from the Father. Following the resurrection, the order of the relationship is reversed from Father-Spirit-Son to Father-Son-Spirit. In the final eschatological consummation, the Parousia, it becomes Spirit-Son-Father. Thus, Moltmann decrees that the three persons of the Trinity work together with changing Trinitarian relationships, thereby challenging the conventional Western fixed pattern of Father-Son-Spirit.⁷⁴⁸ Moreover, when Moltmann ambiguously declares that eschatological processes also take place in God’s “essential nature”,⁷⁴⁹ it is unclear whether he means a change takes place in God’s essential nature or just in his relationships, and he veers into shaky territory.

Importantly, for Moltmann, God is an open Trinity; the Trinitarian history of God is open to the world. Through the experience of the Spirit in faith, baptism and fellowship of the church, we participate in God’s Trinitarian history and future. Moreover, the Trinity is open for the soteriological purpose of uniting the whole of creation with itself.⁷⁵⁰ The Godhead is not an exclusive fellowship but one which draws others in. Bauckham describes it as a “dialectical trinitarianism”. Divine love is exemplified in suffering involvement in human history. “The Trinity is... a dialectical historical process which, by means of the son’s identification with all godlessness, godforsakenness... takes up into itself all human history in its negativity”.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁴ Moltman, *Trinity*, 161,168; Holmes, *Trinity*, 21; Bauckham, *Moltmann*, 109.

⁷⁴⁵ Holmes, *Trinity*, 21.

⁷⁴⁶ Bauckham, *Moltmann*, 109.

⁷⁴⁷ Moltman, *Trinity*, 161.

⁷⁴⁸ Moltman, *Trinity*, 83-95; Bauckham, *Moltmann*, 110.

⁷⁴⁹ Moltman, *Trinity*, 92-93.

⁷⁵⁰ Moltman, *Trinity*, 89-96.

⁷⁵¹ Bauckham, *Moltmann*, 96,99.

Moltmann defines the unity of the Trinity in terms of mutual fellowship. “The unity of the divine tri-unity lies in the *union* of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, not in their numerical unity. It lies in their *fellowship*, not in the identity of a single subject.” It is “a unity which preserves their separate character”.⁷⁵² Moltmann has been charged with tritheism, the unity of the Trinity seeming to be volitional, not ontological. Moltmann responds to this accusation with the doctrine of *perichoresis*,⁷⁵³ which we will come to shortly. Moltmann rightly denounces modalism, though allies it with monotheism, the idea of God as an absolute Monarch.⁷⁵⁴ Moltmann contends that monotheism/monarchism leads to authoritarianism.⁷⁵⁵ He declares, “It is only when the doctrine of the Trinity vanquishes the monotheistic notion of the great universal monarch in heaven, and his divine patriarchs in the world, that earthly rulers, dictators and tyrants cease to find any justifying religious archetypes”.⁷⁵⁶ Moltmann derives a non-hierarchical basis for relationships from the Trinity.⁷⁵⁷ “The three divine Persons have everything in common, except for their personal characteristics. So the Trinity corresponds to a community in which people are defined through their relations with one another”, principally, “a community of men and women, without privileges and without subjugation.”⁷⁵⁸

John Zizioulas, metropolitan bishop of Pergamom, also has a profound sense of the *koinonia* of God; God is personal fellowship. “The being of God is a relational being: without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God.” Effectively, “The substance of God, ‘God,’ has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion... communion becomes an ontological concept in patristic thought... it is communion which makes beings ‘be’: nothing exists without it, not even God.”⁷⁵⁹ Hence, Zizioulas advocates a strong social model of the Trinity; each *hypostasis* is fully personal⁷⁶⁰ but to be a person is to be interdependent. God is one but relationally different. He notes, “Just like ‘substance,’ ‘communion’ does not exist by itself: it is the Father who is the ‘cause’ of it.”⁷⁶¹ Love is “*the supreme ontological predicate*. Love as God’s mode of existence “hypostasizes” God, *constitutes* His being.

⁷⁵² Moltman, *Trinity*, 95. Italics original.

⁷⁵³ Bauckham, *Moltmann*, 109-110; Moltman, *Trinity*, 177.

⁷⁵⁴ Moltman, *Trinity*, 134-138.

⁷⁵⁵ Moltman, *Trinity*, 191-196.

⁷⁵⁶ Moltman, *Trinity*, 197.

⁷⁵⁷ Moltman, *Trinity*, 197-200.

⁷⁵⁸ Moltman, *Trinity*, 198.

⁷⁵⁹ Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.

⁷⁶⁰ Zizioulas, *Being*, 39-41.

⁷⁶¹ Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.

Therefore, as a result of love, the ontology of God is not subject to the necessity of the substance. Love is identified with ontological freedom.”⁷⁶² Nevertheless, Holmes observes that Zizioulas’ ontology leads to a hierarchal ecclesiology, which is played down by his followers.⁷⁶³

Basing his anthropology on the personhood of God, Zizioulas stresses the fundamental difference between being a person and being an individual or personality (the qualities and experiences the self possesses). Persons cannot be imagined in themselves but only within their relationships. A person is a “mode of existence”, “a revelation of truth by the fact of being in communion”. It is in and through this communion that a person affirms his or her own identity and particularity. There is the affirmation of otherness in and through love.⁷⁶⁴ Cortez summarizes Zizioulas’ Trinitarian derived personhood as having four vital principles: persons are i) ontologically fundamental, ii) constituted in community, iii) causally basic, that is, personhood is brought into being by another person, and iv) absolutely unique.⁷⁶⁵

Taking divine inter-relatedness a step further, we arrive at the doctrine of *perichoresis*, or “mutual indwelling” of the divine persons. It has fairly elusive roots but can be attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite and John of Damascus and corresponds to the Cappadocians’ Trinitarian cyclical movement of glorification.⁷⁶⁶ Moltmann expounds: “The Father exists in the Son, the Son in the Father, and both of them in the Spirit, just as the Spirit exists in both the Father and the Son. By virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent... that they are one.”⁷⁶⁷ The divine life and love is communicated and circulated round the Trinity. It is unity in diversity: “the very thing that divides them becomes that which binds them together. The ‘circulation’ of the eternal divine life becomes perfect through the fellowship and unity of the three different Persons in the eternal love.”⁷⁶⁸ Miroslav Volf adds, “This mutually internal abiding and interpenetration of the Trinitarian persons... determines the character both of the divine persons and of their unity.” As such, “they do not cease to be distinct persons... Perichoresis is ‘co-inherence in one another without any coalescence or

⁷⁶² Zizioulas, *Being*, 46. Italics original.

⁷⁶³ Holmes, *Trinity*, 12.

⁷⁶⁴ Zizioulas, *Being*, 105-107.

⁷⁶⁵ Cortez, *Christological Anthropology*, 165, 173.

⁷⁶⁶ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 126-129.

⁷⁶⁷ Moltman, *Trinity*, 174-175.

⁷⁶⁸ Moltman, *Trinity*, 175.

commixture.”” It is the fact that each person carries within it the other divine persons that makes it what it is.⁷⁶⁹ For Moltmann, the concept of *perichoresis* eliminates all subordinationism. Whilst the Father is understood as being the origin of the Godhead, it only applies to the constitution of the Trinity. Within the eternal circulation of the divine life the three persons are equal.⁷⁷⁰ In terms of developing a theological anthropology the doctrine of *perichoresis* encounters problems, since the divine persons and relations are mutually constitutive,⁷⁷¹ as Volf cautions, “Because human persons cannot be internal to one another as subjects, their unity cannot be conceived in a strictly perichoretic fashion”.⁷⁷² For humans the Spirit is the unifying factor.

Smail observes that the personhood of the Son and Spirit are different because they are related to the Father in a different ways. The Son, “begotten” by the Father, is his personal partner and the primary object of his self-giving love. The New Testament does not refer to the Spirit in this way, instead, the Spirit is “the one in whom and by whom their relationship and their self-giving are effected.” Countering Rublev’s depiction in his icon of the Holy Trinity, Smail wagers: “The Spirit is not a third, seated figure alongside Father and Son. He is rather constantly moving personal living energy passing from the Father to the Son and back again, not establishing an I-Thou relationship of his own with either, but rather constituting the relationship between the other two.”⁷⁷³ This remark seems inconsistent with Smail’s theology, which can otherwise be read to fit with Rublev’s icon. Son and Spirit are seen as “interdependent persons who together initiate us into the fullness of life that the Father has for us.”⁷⁷⁴ The icon is not egocentric; the three persons are lost in each other in a perichoretic relationship, which is open to the world. Drawing upon the contribution of Heribert Mühlen, Smail includes an addendum to Augustine’s lover/beloved/bond of love analogy: The Spirit is not just another name for the mutual love of Father and Son; he is the personal product of that love and its bearer from the one to the other.⁷⁷⁵ Smail argues (countering the *Filioque*) that the Spirit is not the expression of the love of the Father and the Son, but rather “the being of the Spirit *originates* in the self-giving of the Father to the Son, and is further characterised by the responsive self-giving of the son to

⁷⁶⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 208-209.

⁷⁷⁰ Moltman, *Trinity*, 175-176.

⁷⁷¹ Shults, *Anthropology*, 92.

⁷⁷² Volf, *Likeness*, 212.

⁷⁷³ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 149-152.

⁷⁷⁴ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 136.

⁷⁷⁵ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 154-156.

the Father.”⁷⁷⁶ In a nutshell: “there is a giver, the Father, and a recipient, the Son, and a gift: and that Gift is personal, since what the Father gives is not just his love, but himself... The Spirit is the Gift of the Father’s very self to the Son.”⁷⁷⁷

Whilst in the eternal life of God the Spirit is of the same being and in closest relationship to Father and Son, the Spirit is also a distinct centre of personal activity. As Ury comments, the church acknowledged the Spirit as a unique and equal member of the Trinity, having an active personal role in the economy of salvation.⁷⁷⁸ This is illustrated in the baptism of Jesus, in the characteristic shape of the divine life, in the dynamic interchange in loving self-giving of Father, Son and Spirit.⁷⁷⁹ Generally, the Spirit “is a person who hides his face, because his work is not to draw attention to himself, but to open us up to Father and Son.”⁷⁸⁰ It is the work of the Spirit to convey God’s love to us and to relate us to the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the primary gift of God to believers. He is not a passive gift but an active giver, a gift who gives the things of God to us; the “Giving gift”.⁷⁸¹ This Gift is a person, retaining his own personal identity; “a subject, living, acting, loving, sovereign and free.”⁷⁸² The actions of the Spirit are personal actions; as well as giving gifts, the Spirit is one who guides (John 16:13), restrains (Acts 16:6) and is grieved (Eph 4:30). John prefers the masculine noun *παράκλητος* to the neuter noun *πνεῦμα* but when he does employ the latter he uses the personal pronoun *ἐκεῖνος* with it. When the New Testament does use impersonal images for the Spirit - wind, fire, water - they are used dynamically to point to someone who has both the will and power to control events.⁷⁸³

In conclusion, Smail affirms, “The mutual self-giving of the Father and Son in the Spirit is of the very essence of the life of God.”⁷⁸⁴ Even more emphatic, “God *is* self-giving” within the life of the Godhead and in relation to the world: Fallen humanity is redeemed by “the Son’s becoming human and offering himself on behalf of humanity in an act of utter self-giving to the Father on the cross, by which the Spirit of self-giving love is released into the world to remake men in their relationships to God and to one

⁷⁷⁶ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 157. Italics original.

⁷⁷⁷ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 158.

⁷⁷⁸ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 55.

⁷⁷⁹ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 146-148.

⁷⁸⁰ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 53.

⁷⁸¹ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 14-22.

⁷⁸² Smail, *Giving Gift*, 21.

⁷⁸³ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 34-35.

⁷⁸⁴ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 200.

another.”⁷⁸⁵ Thus, for Smail, personhood in the Godhead is constituted in *kenosis*, in self-giving. Echoing Zizioulas, Smail stresses that God in himself is love: “God is love: that love is lived out in the dynamic of an eternal divine self-giving, which has its source in the Father.”⁷⁸⁶

Smail and his counterparts have their critics. Holmes believes the social doctrine of the Trinity to be a misappropriation of patristic trinitarianism. He blames the contemporary definition of personhood on a Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment concept of “person” as “individual intelligent substance” and “a fundamental sense of dislocation”. Instead of affirming the “personality” of each of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we should believe in “one divine personality”.⁷⁸⁷ Whilst reacting against modernist individualism is no bad thing, quite what Holmes understands by “personality” is unclear. As we have seen with Zizioulas, social Trinitarians themselves are wary of using that term. We would concur with Ury, that “the application of the modern philosophical/anthropological definition of the individual person to any of the divine Trinity is heretical.”⁷⁸⁸ Rahner too, identifies problems in using the concept of “person” in the doctrine of Trinity, which he fears runs the danger of seeing Father, Son and Holy Spirit as distinct in their essence.⁷⁸⁹ He arrives at another concept, “three distinct manners of subsisting”, to be used in conjunction with “person”, to help qualify what is meant by the latter in the Trinity.⁷⁹⁰

Coakley also cautions against certain modern understandings of a “social” Trinity, which import notions of “person” beholden to post-Enlightenment forms of individualism, veering dangerously towards tri-theism.⁷⁹¹ She turns to the patristic writings of Gregory of Nyssa to weigh them in the balance. Coakley’s chief goal is “to call into question a tendency to read Gregory’s trinitarianism solely in terms of the ‘three men’ analogy, especially with the overtones of psychological self-consciousness or ‘individualism’.”⁷⁹² A main contention is that the social model of Trinity starts with the “three”, whereas Gregory gives prime emphasis to the unity of the divine nature. Defensibly, Moltmann, Zizioulas and Smail do not fall prey to Coakley’s criticism as

⁷⁸⁵ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 151-152, 161. Italics original.

⁷⁸⁶ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 164.

⁷⁸⁷ Holmes, *Trinity*, 194-195, 199-200.

⁷⁸⁸ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 54.

⁷⁸⁹ Rahner, *Trinity*, 104-106.

⁷⁹⁰ Rahner, *Trinity*, 109-115.

⁷⁹¹ Coakley, *Powers*, 111, 115.

⁷⁹² Coakley, *Powers*, 129.

their conception of personhood is not informed by modern individualism but by reciprocity. Neither would they dispute Coakley's next point: "*The ordering of causality in the 'persons' gives a logical pre-eminence to the Father... In this sense Gregory 'starts' with this one 'person', as source and cause of the others.*"⁷⁹³ Coakley distinguishes between "communion" and "community", where the latter is understood as the coming together of individuals. Gregory uses the language of the former: "there is apprehended among these three a certain ineffable and inconceivable communion (*koinōnia*) and at the same time distinction (*diakrisis*) – which latter, however, does not 'disintegrate the continuity of their nature'."⁷⁹⁴ The discussion on the meaning of *hypostasis* grows more precarious. In Coakley's reading of Gregory's definition, it "*does not denote consciousness or self-consciousness... A hypostasis is simply a distinct enough entity to bear some 'particularizing marks'.*"⁷⁹⁵ Further still, "*Gregory's favoured analogies of the Trinity stress the indivisibility of the 'persons' and even a certain fluidity in their boundaries.*"⁷⁹⁶ From a social Trinitarian perspective, it is arguable that Coakley becomes vulnerable to modalism here.

Coakley identifies a strong apophatic current running through Gregory's discourse on the "essence" of God. In particular, "the whole life-work of 'ascent' in Gregory culminates in noetic darkness".⁷⁹⁷ Philosophically, for the Greek Fathers, the unknowability of God remains a core premise. There is a distinction between what God is in Godself (the immanent Trinity) and what God is in relation to others, God's activity in salvation history (the economic Trinity). Moltmann, in tandem with Rahner, argues that this distinction between the economic and the immanent Trinity is a false dichotomy. God reveals himself as creator/loving because that is what he is in his eternal being.⁷⁹⁸ Hence Rahner's famous axiom: "*The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic Trinity'.*"⁷⁹⁹ Rahner contended that neo-scholasticism had made the doctrine of the Trinity an abstract claim about the interiority of God, detached from salvation history.⁸⁰⁰ For Rahner, our being taken into the historical, concrete life of Jesus of Nazareth is our "entry into the

⁷⁹³ Coakley, *Powers*, 118. Italics original as in subsequent quotations.

⁷⁹⁴ Coakley, *Powers*, 120.

⁷⁹⁵ Coakley, *Powers*, 119-120.

⁷⁹⁶ Coakley, *Powers*, 121.

⁷⁹⁷ Coakley, *Powers*, 122.

⁷⁹⁸ Moltmann, *Trinity*, 158-161.

⁷⁹⁹ Rahner, *Trinity*, 22. Italics original.

⁸⁰⁰ Rahner, *Trinity*, 10-14.

blessedness of the triune, inner-divine life”.⁸⁰¹ Similarly, for Smail, the life of God has been made transparent to us. The economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity: “he himself has come into our human world and shown himself to us and invited us to know him as he eternally is. For if the gospel does not show us God as he really and eternally is, then it is... a concealment and not a revelation.”⁸⁰² Bauckham voices a legitimate concern that when the immanent and economic Trinities are collapsed together there is no Trinity behind God’s temporal, world history, for God to be who God essentially is independent of history.⁸⁰³ It threatens to make God a product of human history. Homing in on Moltmann, “By eliminating any distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinities *and* by interpreting the cross as a dialectical Trinitarian event, Moltmann identifies world history ‘in the history of God’ with the process of God’s own self-realisation.”⁸⁰⁴

Contrary to Rahner, Moltmann and Smail, it is prudent to retain some sense of the apophatic, the ineffable mystery of the Godhead. However, from what is known of the divine life, the social model of the Trinity presents the best analogy for human personhood. The essential mutuality means that each person is totally self-giving and at the same time completely affirmed by the other/s. This loving exchange reveals the nature of true personhood. Identity and worth are discovered in relationship. The Trinity is not resembled by persons in the singular. Human beings are not constituted by the triune nature; God is triune and human beings are not. Rather, “to bear the *imago Dei* is to reflect the Trinity’s unity and uniqueness within our own relations with the divine and the human other. The relational life of the triune God is not represented *within* ourselves but *among* ourselves.”⁸⁰⁵ That is, in “full, mature and productive love relationships”.⁸⁰⁶ Whilst retaining the essential relational context, it is noteworthy that the “uniqueness of the individual person is a distinctly Christian phenomenon.”⁸⁰⁷ From a biblical perspective, the person came to be seen as an entity that was not tied to the social order; the Fathers’ use of *prosopon* meant an object with a unique being of its own.⁸⁰⁸ In sum, we are created to be in relationship with God and other humans in

⁸⁰¹ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 113-114.

⁸⁰² Smail, *Giving Gift*, 145.

⁸⁰³ Bauckham, *Moltmann*, 100.

⁸⁰⁴ Bauckham, *Moltmann*, 107. Italics original.

⁸⁰⁵ Balwick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 45. Italics original.

⁸⁰⁶ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 37-38.

⁸⁰⁷ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 14.

⁸⁰⁸ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 86,92.

relationships characterized by uniqueness, unity and reciprocity.⁸⁰⁹ We will now see how this applies to the Church and its mission in the world.

Trinitarian Ecclesiology and Personhood

Church culture has assimilated to existing society. Volf warns: “the worm of modernity is slowly eating away at the root of this will to ecclesial community; faith lived ecclesially is being replaced by faith lived individualistically, a diffuse faith that includes within itself the elements of multiple forms of religiosity”.⁸¹⁰ Zizioulas laments that respect for one’s “personal identity” is the most important ideal of our time. Contemporary humanism “has succeeded in detaching the concept of the person from theology and uniting it with the idea of an autonomous morality or with an existential philosophy which is purely humanistic.”⁸¹¹ Communion is no longer constitutive of being; every being acquires an ontological status on its own merit. Thus, the notion of individuality is explained by “the rupture between being and communion.”⁸¹² Rational beings are seen as persons because they are sovereign ends in themselves. Postmodern society promotes a disparity with modern society in that the individual ceases to be a permanent category, adopting whatever *persona* currently appeals. The postmodern self lacks a stable inner core. In a consumer-orientated society, relationships are instrumental, superficial, lacking commitment or depth. Balswick et al. deduce that contemporary society is not conducive to promoting reciprocating selves.⁸¹³

By contrast, a truly Christian concept of personhood holds to an ontological and relational understanding. The Cappadocian Fathers, as conceived, gave meaning to personhood as a distinct reality in relationship; we understand who each of the persons of the Godhead are in relation to the other. Personhood recognises both the dignity of the individual and primacy of community. The ultimate ground of reality is community and love, exemplified by the eternal communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As Zizioulas corroborates, “It is only in relationship that identity appears as having an ontological significance”.⁸¹⁴ Granted that the different relations of the persons of the Trinity constitute their particularity, Volf applies this anthropologically to conclude that: “*each human being is constituted into a person by what in each case is a different*

⁸⁰⁹ Balswick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 45.

⁸¹⁰ Volf, *Likeness*, 11

⁸¹¹ Zizioulas, *Being*, 27.

⁸¹² Zizioulas, *Being*, 102-103.

⁸¹³ Balswick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 337-338.

⁸¹⁴ Zizioulas, *Being*, 88.

*relation of God to that human being.*⁸¹⁵ Hence, the social Trinitarian model is inconsistent with a loss of self or identity, which would be modalism. The individual is significant and is not to be absorbed into the collective, an error made by Christians concerning selfless love, as Rowan Williams highlights:

[T]he trinitarian pattern tells us that divine act is not an eternal sameness at all, but *relational* act; so that the challenge for creatures is not the abolition of difference and the cancellation of the subject, but the subject's growth into precisely that recognition of and enactment of the self's reality *in* the other that is the heart of the theological vision.⁸¹⁶

Relationships are dependent on well-formed personal identities⁸¹⁷ but, at the same time, we discover our identities in relationship. The perfection of divine and human love is not self-orientated but other-orientated. God creates us in his own image, "a diversity of persons, sharing a common humanity but endlessly different from each other.... his purpose for such distinct human persons should be for them to find their unity in self-giving love towards one another".⁸¹⁸ Accordingly, Smail defines sin as "a refusal of self-giving".⁸¹⁹ In the Spirit, the Father and the Son give themselves to us, so that we are enabled to live a life in the same shape as the life of the triune God.⁸²⁰ Likewise, in line with Moltmann, Volf articulates a conception of personhood in which person and relation are complementary: "person and relation emerge simultaneously and mutually presuppose one another."⁸²¹ On this basis, "it is possible to conceive ecclesial personhood in correspondence to Trinitarian personhood... Christians are constituted as independently believing persons through their relations to other Christians, and they manifest and affirm their own ecclesial personhood in mutual giving and receiving."⁸²²

The communitarian doctrine of the Trinity needs to be re-instated as the foundation for Christian worship, fellowship and mission. It serves as a model to emulate, recognising the limits of the correlation. "Person" and "communion" in ecclesiology can only be taken as analogous to "person" and "communion" in the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸²³ God intends the Christian Church to be "that community of people who... have been enabled to share through Christ in God's own life, and who... have begun to share their lives

⁸¹⁵ Volf, *Likeness*, 182. Italics original.

⁸¹⁶ Williams, "The Deflections of Desire," in *Silence and the Word*, ed. Davies and Turner, 131.

⁸¹⁷ Balwick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 339.

⁸¹⁸ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 151.

⁸¹⁹ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 151.

⁸²⁰ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 162-163.

⁸²¹ Volf, *Likeness*, 185.

⁸²² Volf, *Likeness*, 206.

⁸²³ Volf, *Likeness*, 198-199.

with one another on every level.”⁸²⁴ We find ourselves by participating in the Church. In the unity of the body of Christ, the diversity of persons is affirmed and valued, as illustrated by 1 Corinthians 12 on spiritual gifts.⁸²⁵ We serve Christ’s Church and the Church serves us. Equally, Christ gives himself to us and we give ourselves to him. According to Volf, the church is made into a communion corresponding to the Trinity because “the Son indwells human beings through the Spirit... the unity of the church is grounded in the interiority of the Spirit”.⁸²⁶ One of the main functions of the Spirit is to create community. Smail writes, the Spirit “is the personal bond of unity of the Church who integrates people into the one life of Christ and so into one life with one another.”⁸²⁷ The Spirit is characterised by *koinonia*, “having in common, the sharing of a common life.” The English word “fellowship” fails to do it justice. *Koinonia* is the horizontal sharing of life among believers in conjunction with a vertical sharing of this life with the Father and Son.⁸²⁸

Gunton emphasises the Spirit “makes possible individuality without individualism and community without authoritarianism.”⁸²⁹ Community is not collectivism: “human life is conceived... not as a collection of isolated atomic individuals, but as a community where the law of our being is worked out”.⁸³⁰ For Gunton, the church is “a society which exists in and for the rest of society as a model and creator of community”.⁸³¹ Frances Ward argues that Christianity shapes the soul of society to be corporate rather than individualistic. To see oneself as a member of a body means individual rights become less important than responsibility to the body.⁸³² The concept of “equality” gains its real validity theologically; everyone is seen to be equal in the sight of God, regardless of their personal circumstances. The Christian conception of a society is based upon public service and impartial love of neighbours, regardless of status.⁸³³ The church has a mandate to exemplify the Trinitarian life both within its own walls and in its mission to the world.

⁸²⁴ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 183.

⁸²⁵ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 188.

⁸²⁶ Volf, *Likeness*, 213.

⁸²⁷ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 187-189.

⁸²⁸ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 182-183.

⁸²⁹ Gunton, *Enlightenment and Alienation*, 105.

⁸³⁰ Gunton, *Enlightenment*, 107.

⁸³¹ Gunton, *Enlightenment*, 106.

⁸³² Ward, *Why Rousseau was Wrong*, 109.

⁸³³ Ward, *Rousseau*, 55.

Ian Mobsby, an Anglican priest with extensive experience of working with new forms of church, believes a deeply held Trinitarian theology and lived experience of the doctrine of the Trinity is essential for an engagement with our post-Enlightenment and postmodern society. “The Trinity shows us what both true spirituality and the real meaning of Christianity are all about”.⁸³⁴ This is recognised by the Emerging Church movement, whose values are informed by a Trinitarian ecclesiology, which shape the various aspects of church life: worship, community, inclusivity, diversity, discipleship, social action, creativity, hospitality and outreach.⁸³⁵ This is something for all churches to aspire to, to be spiritual communities reflecting the nature of the triune Godhead. At the same time, there remains a need for appropriate accountability, structure and models of leadership.⁸³⁶ Endorsing a Trinitarian relational model, Balswick et al. conclude:

Progress toward becoming a mature reciprocating self is fostered best within a network of relationships characterized by unconditional love, grace, empowering and intimacy. The goal of the maturation process is to become a person with the capacity... to reciprocate each of these characteristics: *to love and be loved, to forgive and be forgiven, to empower and be empowered, and to know and to be known.*⁸³⁷

Conclusion

A Christological anthropology reveals that Jesus is the perfect image of God and God’s intention for humanity is to become like Christ. A Trinitarian anthropology shows how we are conformed to Christ through mutual reciprocal relations with God, humans and creation.⁸³⁸ As Balswick et al. encapsulate in their relational understanding of *imago Dei*, “Theological anthropology suggests that bearing the image of God means living as unique individuals in reciprocating relationships with others. To be human is to be a particular being in relationships, distinct and unique, yet inseparably bound up with the other”.⁸³⁹ The word “persons” would be more fitting than “individuals” here. Cortez remarks, “few anthropological concepts are used more widely and with less clarity than that of the *person*.”⁸⁴⁰ We have sought to retrieve a theological concept of person, rooted in the social doctrine of the Trinity, to provide a much needed corrective to misguided ideas about the person, generated by the self determinism and isolationism of

⁸³⁴ Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 6,34.

⁸³⁵ Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 72-74.

⁸³⁶ Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 79.

⁸³⁷ Balswick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 351. Italics original.

⁸³⁸ Balswick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 31.

⁸³⁹ Balswick, King and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 41.

⁸⁴⁰ Cortez, *Christological Anthropology*, 163. Italics original.

our modern Western world.⁸⁴¹ The failure of the self in relation to the other is a defining feature of our times.⁸⁴² As Spaemann holds forth, persons are constituted by the reciprocating gaze of another.⁸⁴³ To be a person is inextricably bound up with being in relation. We are relational because God is relational. In the economy and eternal life of the Trinity, Christ models for us true personhood. “The mystery of God is revealed in Christ and the Spirit as the mystery of love, the mystery of persons in communion... Jesus Christ, the visible icon of the invisible God, discloses what it means to be fully personal, divine as well as human.”⁸⁴⁴

Loving relationality requires that the ego is not self-serving but focused upon the other. “We were made by a God who is self-giving in himself, in order that he might give himself to us and that we might give ourselves to him and to one another.”⁸⁴⁵ The doctrines of *kenosis* and the Trinity disclose that God is self-giving by nature. Equally, the persons of the Trinity each receive from one another; their distinctive identities are confirmed through their reciprocity. The Triune God, who calls us by name, loves us and affirms our unique identities. Therefore, we can give ourselves to God and others, who hold us in being. We gain ourselves by giving ourselves. We find our true selves in relation to God and others. LaCugna reflects, “The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life.”⁸⁴⁶ We have explored this in terms of ecclesiology; it now remains to deliberate upon Christian discipleship in daily life. Rahner sees following Christ as an active participation with Jesus’ life and the inner-divine life: “we must try to make our following of Jesus a conscious reality; we must exercise it and cultivate it; as we grow in this Christ-life that has been already given to us”.⁸⁴⁷ It is to this more conscious, practical effort that we now turn.

⁸⁴¹ Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood*, 4.

⁸⁴² Shults, *Anthropology*, 83.

⁸⁴³ Spaemann, *Persons*, 77.

⁸⁴⁴ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 1.

⁸⁴⁵ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 200.

⁸⁴⁶ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 1.

⁸⁴⁷ Endean, ed., *Rahner*, 116.

Chapter 5

Christian Discipleship: Taming and Training the Ego

Introduction

We have journeyed far with the ego. In chapter one, we faced up to our modern/postmodern identity: the hubris of the sovereign self and the narcissistic consumer self. The backlash to this woefully excessive self-affirmation in popular culture is self-denial, which fabricates an unhelpful dichotomy. We then explored psychology's more realistic and holistic understanding of the self, its potential for self-deception as well as self-development, learning that the ego is part of and accountable to a much bigger Self. In chapter three, we travelled further back in time to chart the Christian mystics' denial of the self-orientated "false self", in contrast to the true self, which connects us with the divine. Turning to the Christian Doctrine of God as Trinity, in chapter four, we found a model "par excellence" for human self-understanding; it is in relationship and being other-focused that we fulfil our destiny. Rowan Williams writes, "the heart of discipleship is bound up with the life of the Trinity; as we develop our understanding of the Trinitarian life of God... so we develop in our understanding of what provides the root and energy of our being disciples here and now."⁸⁴⁸ Just as the Son gazes into the mystery of his Father's love and enacts it, in heaven and on earth, "so we in our discipleship are summoned to gaze into the mystery of that infinite love and to seek to do that same eternal will".⁸⁴⁹ In this chapter, we see how that contemplative awareness aids action. Irrespective of any shortcomings identified in chapters two and three, both psychology and spirituality have something valuable to contribute. Drawing upon their complementary insights, tools are offered for transforming the ego to function as God intended. We will consider the Jungian concept of the Shadow, Myers-Briggs' personality theory, the spiritual disciplines of Contemplative Prayer and the Examen, to ascertain that these serve as fruitful popular out workings of the scholarly material examined in chapters two and three.

Peter Scazzero argues: "emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable."⁸⁵⁰ Some would disagree. We have surveyed various mystics, spiritual giants, where we find examples of rigorous asceticism, which spurned emotional props. However, the

⁸⁴⁸ Williams, *Being Disciples*, 15.

⁸⁴⁹ Williams, *Disciples*, 14.

⁸⁵⁰ Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 12.

accelerated climate of today, where life is measured in terms of productivity and outcomes, demands a more holistic perspective. We saw this in chapter one, where the postmodern fragmented self invites a mediating approach. The stresses of Western living are pervasive. Clergy “burnout”, for instance, is an ever increasing concern, arising where ministers have no boundaries and ignore their own emotional needs in an effort to meet unrealistic expectations. This thesis maintains that there exists a close relationship between psychological wholeness and spiritual holiness, emotional and spiritual health, without conflating the two. Spiritual development can be blocked by personality problems and certain personality issues need a spiritual perspective. Sanctification entails psychological progress.⁸⁵¹ Shining the spotlight on the individual does not negate the conclusions of the previous chapter. Rather, as Mobsby observes, the health of a community depends upon the self-awareness of members within it. When unresolved psychological issues are projected onto the life of the community, churches can become dysfunctional. Psychological and spiritual wellbeing matters. “We seek to emulate the complexity of the perichoretic Triune Godhead by recognizing the interconnectedness of personal identity, health, church and spirituality.”⁸⁵² A whole life approach to discipleship is essential.

Next, we return to Jesus’ radical call to discipleship, where we began our journey. We now do so in the light of the material explored throughout the thesis, which links with and provides the themes through which we apprehend Christian discipleship. We will incorporate two further voices from the world of contemporary spirituality, Kim Nataraja and Brian Draper, whose positions resonate with the findings of this thesis. Nataraja, in particular, effectively marries contemplative spirituality and Jungian psychology.

A radical call to discipleship: Denying the self

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves (ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν) and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life (ψυχὴν)⁸⁵³ will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. (Mark 8:34b-35)

Reading these challenging verses within the framework of this thesis affords some illumination. Jesus’ ultimatum is an uncompromising “wake up” call. For our purposes,

⁸⁵¹ Savary, et al, *Dreams and Spiritual Growth*, 70.

⁸⁵² Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 137-138, 149.

⁸⁵³ Greek means either life or soul.

it begs the question: What exactly is the self Jesus asks us to deny? The Greek is rendered in the singular, “himself”, but commentaries consulted are silent on the intended meaning of himself. What is plain, as Cole remarks, is that the “me generation” cult of self-fulfilment is foreign to the gospels.⁸⁵⁴ So, we import an interpretation in the light of our deliberations. Granted the insights of chapters one to three, we might surmise that it is the self-serving, false self to which Jesus refers. Identifying entirely with our ego, or *persona*, creates a false sense of self. It is plain that the cost of discipleship is total letting go of that self. Cole writes, “The one who tries to live this life ‘for self’, who hoards it jealously and selfishly, will lose it. This is true, not only finally in the death that all must face, but moment by moment, for such selfish life is no true life... a refusal to accept this ‘death to self’, which is the bearing of Christ’s cross and following Him, is a spiritual death; whereas, by a divine paradox, spiritual life is to be found only by dying to self.”⁸⁵⁵ Fraser Watts observes that the Greek word translated as “life” is “psyche”, which infers mind-set as well as meaning physical life. The concept of *metanoia*, a fundamental change of mindset, is at the heart of Jesus’ teaching. To embrace new attitudes, old ones need to be abandoned.⁸⁵⁶

Mark sees discipleship in terms of imitating Christ.⁸⁵⁷ Evans concentrates upon the message that the true disciple must be prepared to share Jesus’ fate: “For the first-century inhabitant of the Roman Empire, taking up one’s cross would call to mind the condemned person carrying his cross to the place of execution... Jesus’ summons would have struck a somber, if not macabre, note”.⁸⁵⁸ To be a follower of Christ entails sharing in Christ’s sufferings as well as his glory. This is potently conveyed by the elemental sacraments of the Christian faith. Through the waters of baptism we identify with Christ’s dying and rising to new life. We die to the sinful self and take on a new redeemed identity, welcomed into membership of Christ’s Church. In the Eucharist, in obedience to Christ’s command, we recall the events of the Last Supper and Christ’s passion; they are re-actualized in the present.

⁸⁵⁴ Cole, *Mark*, 207.

⁸⁵⁵ Cole, *Mark*, 207.

⁸⁵⁶ Watts, “Personal Transformation,” in *Jesus Psychology*, 71.

⁸⁵⁷ Hooker, *The Message of Mark*, 105, 110-111.

⁸⁵⁸ Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, section on Mark 8:34-9:1.

As discerned in chapter one, the self-esteem movement and culture of narcissism has permeated the church, causing a shift from an ethic of self-denial to self-fulfilment.⁸⁵⁹ Popular spiritual writers retort with the claim: “You are not your ego.”⁸⁶⁰ However, in the light of Jungian psychology, this should be restated as: You are not entirely your ego. The solution is not to shun the ego. The ego is a part of us, created to serve the larger personality within us. Self-realisation is not ego-centred. The Self beckons the ego towards it in the individuation process. As the contemplative and Benedictine Oblate, Kim Nataraja, explains it is about ego integration rather than annihilation: “The spiritual path is a journey of integrating Mind and Heart, the *ego* – our surface personality – and our deeper *self*, which is the centre of our whole being and the link with the Source of All.”⁸⁶¹ Discovering one’s Self is a means to knowing God as a reality beyond the psyche as well as within it. We need to reconnect with the Self, “the *eternal* inside us and outside us.”⁸⁶²

Like Rohr, Nataraja recognizes the important role of the ego in the first half of life, but, unlike him, she does not then dispense with it. The survival skills and wisdom of the ego are needed for dealing with the internal and external world. “We need an *ego* development that goes hand in hand with the growing awareness of the spiritual *self*”. This requires “a shift in emphasis from the ego to the self. We need an *ego* that sees the wider picture, a conscious centre that accepts unconscious material into its vision and sees itself as an integral part of the whole.”⁸⁶³ According to Nataraja, Jesus is a model of an “individuating ego”, in the Jungian sense.⁸⁶⁴ Both effort and grace are needed to effect a permanent transformation: “a dance of integration of the *ego* and its *shadow*, of the *ego* and the *self*, of the *self* and the Ultimate Reality.”⁸⁶⁵ The deeper self is a guiding force within; the “meeting ground with Consciousness of Christ”.⁸⁶⁶ We can return to wider consciousness by temporarily turning off the “ego-circuit”. This, allegedly, is what Jesus meant by “leave self behind” (Luke 9:23). Then we become conscious of our “interconnectedness with the Divine ground of our being.”⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁵⁹ Harrison, *The Big Ego Trip*, 69-71.

⁸⁶⁰ Draper, *Spiritual Intelligence*, 70-73.

⁸⁶¹ Nataraja, *Dancing with your Shadow*, xvii. Italics original as in subsequent quotations.

⁸⁶² Nataraja, *Dancing*, 3.

⁸⁶³ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 13.

⁸⁶⁴ Watts, “Personal Transformation,” 75.

⁸⁶⁵ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 13, 19.

⁸⁶⁶ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 79.

⁸⁶⁷ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 132-133.

The ego lives a limited existence, so Jesus calls people to abandon their ego-bound lives and follow him. Leaving behind the old self/life and embracing a new one is a constant refrain throughout the New Testament. The new life consists in changed belief, moral transformation, spiritual union with Christ and becoming part of his body on earth.⁸⁶⁸ “Self” realisation entails our ongoing transformation into the likeness of Christ; putting Christ at the centre of our lives in place of our ego, then, through our Christlike centre our whole Self may be realised.⁸⁶⁹ St Paul declared: “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20) It is about saying “no” to ourselves and “yes” to Christ. As discovered in chapter four, our unity with Christ does not eradicate our personal distinctiveness. Smail stresses: “what Christ abolishes is the old rebellious self of my sinful independence. My distinct personhood continues into my new life in Christ”.⁸⁷⁰ The spiritual writer and speaker, Brian Draper affirms, “As we repent, and ‘die’ to our incomplete, false self, we begin to awaken to the whole, true self we were created to be. And that self is very good.”⁸⁷¹ Self-denial should not be interpreted as denying the existence of the self/ego but as saying “no” to our selfish instincts. The old self, corrupted by desires, wants to be a god. Self-denial involves learning to recognise the “me-centred”, vain self. Finding the deeper, true self, Christ in us, serves to displace the grumbling, greedy, fake self. It necessitates being unmade and re-made. The sanctification process strips away our accumulated false constructs and enables our true selves to emerge.⁸⁷²

Genuine self-knowledge, “awareness of our total being and of the Divine within”, entails getting to know the ego and its motivations, whereas self-consciousness is more narrowly focused upon the surface thoughts of the ego and is detrimental to discovering the deeper self and transpersonal reality.⁸⁷³ We encountered this subtle difference with Ignatius and St Teresa. Timothy Keller provides further clarity: “the essence of gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less.”⁸⁷⁴ The ego exists but it knows its place: “The truly gospel-humble person is a self-forgetful person whose ego is just like his or her toes. It just works. It does not

⁸⁶⁸ Watts, “Personal Transformation,” 63.

⁸⁶⁹ Sanford, *Dreams*, 175.

⁸⁷⁰ Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 60-61.

⁸⁷¹ Draper, *Spiritual*, 113.

⁸⁷² Scazzero, *Spirituality*, 28.

⁸⁷³ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 12.

⁸⁷⁴ Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, 32.

draw attention to itself.”⁸⁷⁵ This is possible when we find our identity and acceptance in Christ, not from personal successes.⁸⁷⁶ For Glynn Harrison, this generates a changed outlook: instead of “what’s good for me”, we seek the good of God’s kingdom; “as we remodel the plot-line of our lives around its beckoning destiny, we discover the liberation of self-forgetfulness.”⁸⁷⁷ Smail relates this back to our paradox: “when we subordinate... our own purposes to those of God and when we deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow, we do not lose but gain”.⁸⁷⁸

As witnessed in chapter three, an attitude of detachment is required: “We need to purify the ego of its need for control and other desires.”⁸⁷⁹ Social conditioning and upbringing can cultivate false self-images, destructive to our true being. We become prisoners of the past, unmet needs and the ego. Detaching oneself from the ego creates distance from habitual defences to enable the self to respond with greater freedom.⁸⁸⁰ Draper issues the challenge to let go of the attachments that create a false sense of self: “at its most profound level, you have an identity to surrender, the image your ego has created on your behalf.”⁸⁸¹ The way of detachment frees us from our false self and fallen identity. Kellenberger upholds Christ as the ideal: “Christ as a paradigm of detachment had perfect detachment.”⁸⁸² Cynthia Bourgeault offers a fresh perspective on what dying to self and detachment looks like. It is not characterised by aestheticism, abstinence or inner renunciation; the key thing Jesus models is not grasping after anything and total self-giving/self-squandering:

Over and over, Jesus lays this path before us. There is nothing to be renounced or resisted. Everything can be embraced, but the catch is to cling to nothing. You let it go. You go through life like a knife goes through a done cake, picking up nothing, clinging to nothing, sticking to nothing. And grounded in that fundamental chastity of your being, you can then throw yourself out, pour yourself out, being able to give it all back, even giving back life itself. That’s the kenotic path in a nutshell. Very, very simple. It only costs everything.⁸⁸³

As we learnt in chapter four, this way of *kenosis* is the vocation of believers. However, adding a rider to Bourgeault, there are occasions when it is appropriate to refuse our

⁸⁷⁵ Keller, *Self-Forgetfulness*, 33.

⁸⁷⁶ Keller, *Self-Forgetfulness*, 39.

⁸⁷⁷ Harrison, *Ego*, 22.

⁸⁷⁸ Smail, *Giving Gift*, 178.

⁸⁷⁹ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 21-22,44.

⁸⁸⁰ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 59-63.

⁸⁸¹ Draper, *Spiritual*, 84.

⁸⁸² Kellenberger, *Dying to Self and Detachment*, 68.

⁸⁸³ Bourgeault, *The Wisdom of Jesus*, 69-70.

desires, as Jesus himself did in the wilderness. We need a proper sense of self-denial, which requires practice. If we do not discipline ourselves we will lose ourselves and destroy our planet. We can starve the false self by practising spiritual disciplines: prayer, silence, fasting and charitable giving, so long as these in themselves do not spiral us into self-concern. The Christian life is the surrendered life. Draper insists: “we have to surrender who we think we are in order to discover who we always were. We have to lose our life (as we know it), in order to find it.”⁸⁸⁴ We are freed from egotism and status anxiety, when we know who we are, and act from the core of who we are, in love and service.⁸⁸⁵

Discipleship concerns how we live our lives, being consistently in the company of Christ, through scripture, prayer and the life of the body of Christ, sufficiently free of the preoccupations of ego, in order to be open to what God is giving.⁸⁸⁶ It is “a trinitarian mode of life... a contemplative mode of life” which “overflows, in a mode of being and action in the world”.⁸⁸⁷ John’s gospel depicts discipleship as a continuing relationship of “staying” or “abiding” with Christ, hence Williams describes discipleship as “a state of being”.⁸⁸⁸ Central to this is “a state of *awareness*”, inseparable from “a sort of *expectancy*”, watching and listening to the Master, in order that the disciple may be changed.⁸⁸⁹ As well as paying attention to Christ, the most important spiritual discipline to be cultivated is that of ego/self observation. Draper notes it is not so much about escaping the ego as moving beyond it, transcending “the exclusive domain of the mind”, in order to monitor ourselves, “practically stopping to unplug, settle, notice the ego, become aware of your whole self, and nurture your sense of presence”.⁸⁹⁰ It is about learning to recognise the “whole, real, made-in-image-of-God self” to be nurtured, thereby facilitating change.⁸⁹¹

As we journey deeper into the mystery of our own being and doing, we will begin to grow.... we experience a qualitative change that may be subtle, almost invisible to the naked eye; especially if we begin at first to grow by subtraction, losing our attachments, laying down our ego-driven compulsions, putting to death our former selves. And so we must try to see our growth through the eyes of our heart, once more, and not the eyes of our ego.⁸⁹²

⁸⁸⁴ Draper, *Spiritual*, 85-86.

⁸⁸⁵ Draper, *Spiritual*, 63.

⁸⁸⁶ Williams, *Disciples*, 15-16.

⁸⁸⁷ Williams, *Disciples*, 17-18.

⁸⁸⁸ Williams, *Disciples*, 1-2.

⁸⁸⁹ Williams, *Disciples*, 3-8.

⁸⁹⁰ Draper, *Spiritual*, 88-89.

⁸⁹¹ Draper, *Spiritual*, 120.

⁸⁹² Draper, *Spiritual*, 184-185.

Tools for Transformation

It is time to introduce psychological and spiritual practices which aid self-observation and serve to tame and train the ego to become more Christ-centred. They form part of a wider tradition of Christian virtues and disciplines for discipleship. The tools that follow have been selected because they are beneficial for developing self-awareness and are in the popular domain. It is important to present practices that are accessible to the laity, as we ponder the discipleship journey incumbent upon all Christians. At the same time, they emerge from the academic sources studied earlier, carrying the weight of spiritual and psychological orthodoxy. Thus, they do not fall prey to the errors that some of the “pop” psycho-spiritualities on the market, with more shaky foundations, are guilty of. We will also assess how these tools sit within the self-affirmation/self-denial paradigm.

The Psychological Approach: Fostering Emotional Intelligence

In chapter two, in addition to the Freudian and Jungian conceptions of the Self, we looked at the inauthentic versus the authentic self, aided by the concept of emotional intelligence, which places considerable responsibility upon the ego. Emotional literacy can be improved by fostering the relevant skills. Goleman foresees a day “when education will routinely include inculcating essential human competencies such as self-awareness, self-control, and empathy, and the arts of listening, resolving conflicts, and cooperation.”⁸⁹³ In Britain there has been an emphasis on educating the whole child. EQ competencies continue to be fostered through Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education, including Collective Worship and the wider curriculum. For adults, there are aids available such as the *Emotional Intelligence Workbook*, covering the areas of becoming emotionally aware, attitudes and assumptions, self-knowledge, communication skills, emotional control, coping with tiring feelings and specific situations such as criticism and conflict.⁸⁹⁴

In the Grove Booklet, *Ministering with Emotional Intelligence*, Colin Horseman argues for emotional intelligence to be both a resource and a qualification for ministry. He believes efforts should be made to apply the principles of EI to the selection, training and practice of Christian ministry.⁸⁹⁵ He views the principles of emotional intelligence to be in keeping with Christian theology, in particular, the notion of Personhood,

⁸⁹³ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, xiv.

⁸⁹⁴ le Roux and de Klerk, *Workbook*.

⁸⁹⁵ Horseman, *Ministering with Emotional Intelligence*, 3,26-27.

biblical Wisdom Literature, the example of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸⁹⁶ In church life self and social awareness, self-management and constructive relationships are critical for church leaders and members, in the building up of the body of Christ. Self-control is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Horseman states that we will know emotional intelligence is beginning to be developed in the life of our church when people feel free to be honest about themselves and when we minister to one another to understand, manage and work with our emotions. “Empathy, forgiveness, honesty and love are easy, often-used words. When they are practised as much as they are talked about, the church will be being more true to the kingdom of God.”⁸⁹⁷ We now pinpoint two areas which increase EI, both of which have their origins in Jungian psychology. For our purposes, we have placed the Shadow and MBTI under the broader canopy of emotional intelligence, but they can be addressed on their own terms.

Shadow Work

In chapter two, we learnt that Jung saw the psychological shadow as an essential source of self-knowledge.⁸⁹⁸ Here we explore further the impact that the shadow can have upon daily existence, before specifying some ways of working with the shadow. The “shadow complex” is made up of the denied, rejected and subsequently, inaccessible aspects of the Self.⁸⁹⁹ The *persona* and shadow are in direct negative correlation; the *persona* serves to disguise and camouflage the shadow, presenting a respectable image to the outer world. The “law of psychic balance” necessitates that if desirable qualities fill the *persona*, the other side of the psyche relating to the inner world will contain the opposite qualities to the *persona*.⁹⁰⁰ The more idealised the *persona*, the more shadow work there is to do. Robert Bly describes the personal shadow as “The long bag we drag behind us”. It is as though we have had an invisible bag behind us since infancy. Throughout life, the parts of us which were disapproved of by our parents, teachers and significant others got stuffed into the bag.⁹⁰¹ Stevens verifies: “[T]he shadow possesses qualities that the superego (the internalized parental authority) loathes and despises”.⁹⁰² Miller observes that people who grow up in a relaxed, open and accepting environment have fewer things to repress and do not develop massive shadows. Whereas those who

⁸⁹⁶ Horseman, *Ministering*, 8-11.

⁸⁹⁷ Horseman, *Ministering*, 21.

⁸⁹⁸ Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, 66.

⁸⁹⁹ Stevens, *Private Myths*, 208.

⁹⁰⁰ Miller, *Make Friends with Your Shadow*, 22.

⁹⁰¹ Bly, *A Little Book on the Human Shadow*, 17.

⁹⁰² Stevens, *Myths*, 209.

grow up in a restrictive atmosphere that is demanding, legalistic, tense and suppressive, have many things to deny and repress.⁹⁰³ In sum:

The shadow is like a foreign personality – a primitive, instinctive, animalistic kind of being. It is the collection of uncivilized desires and feelings that simply have no place in cultured society. The shadow is everything we don't want to be. Or rather, it is perhaps everything we would *like* to be but don't dare. The shadow is everything we don't want others to know about us. It is everything we don't even want to know about ourselves and thus conveniently "forgotten" through denial and repression.⁹⁰⁴

We may convince ourselves that we have safely buried our shadow selves out of sight and mind, but the shadow is not so compliant. We risk becoming split into two personalities, as the classic tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde illustrates. Dr Jekyll is the paragon of respectability in Victorian bourgeois society. However, Jekyll recognised that a lifetime of denying his baser passions would be intolerable. He conceived the person of Mr Hyde in order to give his instinctive self free reign, whilst keeping the reputation of Dr Jekyll untarnished.⁹⁰⁵ In William Golding's, *Lord of the Flies*, the collective shadow becomes manifest, representing the taboos of a society.⁹⁰⁶ Golding depicts *Lord of the Flies* as "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects in human nature."⁹⁰⁷ The boys' adventure tale is a parody of Ballantyne's, *Coral Island*. The situation in which the boys find themselves appears idyllic. However, the dawning realisation that society no longer has a hold over them precipitates a descent into anarchy, suggesting that morality is not innate but conditioned. Unbridled savage inclinations result in the murder of Piggy and the saintly Simon. Simon recognised that the "beast" is no external threat but lives within the boys. When "the beast", the shadow, is given expression destruction follows. At the end when the whole island is in flames and the cruiser appears, Ralph weeps "for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart".⁹⁰⁸ Ralph knows that the savagery on the island is but a microcosm of the war going on in the world. In both stories, those unfettered by moral restraint become governed by evil.

Initially the shadow boasts deeds for the good of human civilisation and then the evils become apparent. Jung recalls the horrors which not only dictator states have brought

⁹⁰³ Miller, *Shadow*, 24-25.

⁹⁰⁴ Miller, *Shadow*, 23. Italics original.

⁹⁰⁵ Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

⁹⁰⁶ Golding, *Lord of the Flies*.

⁹⁰⁷ <http://schoolworkhelper.net/lord-of-the-flies-chapter-1-characters-and-themes-analysis/> (23.5.15)

⁹⁰⁸ Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 225.

upon humankind but also the barbarities perpetrated by Christian nations throughout European history, including against indigenous populations during colonization. “It shows us a picture of the common human shadow that could hardly be painted in blacker colors. The evil that comes to light in man and that undoubtedly dwells within him is of gigantic proportions”.⁹⁰⁹ Jung laments that we regard ourselves as harmless and so add “stupidity” to “iniquity”. It is not that we deny that terrible things happen but it is always “others” who do them. Just as individuals foist their unrecognised shadows onto others, political bodies tend to see the evil in the opposite group.⁹¹⁰ The shadow arouses in us strong emotions of fear, anger and moral outrage, by which to justify our actions. Stevens explains:

At the core of the shadow complex is the archetype of the Enemy. Learning to live on good terms with ‘the enemy within’ means that one is less likely to project it on to other people... instead of controlling (repressing) it or running away from it (denial), the ego initiates dialogue with the shadow, and, by confronting it and making efforts to befriend it, enters into a hedonic bond with it, thus rendering its energy available to the total personality.⁹¹¹

The Shadow is not necessarily evil in itself but it has the potential for evil when it is unharnessed or unrecognised. Jung asserts that we are individually and jointly culpable; we share in human nature and he implores us to take responsibility. “None of us stands outside of humanity’s black collective shadow.”⁹¹² Stevens concludes: “when... the shadow is acknowledged and ‘owned’, an important change comes over the personality as a whole: not only do we stop running away from our own aggressiveness, but we take possession of it, assume responsibility for it, and use it, one hopes, *ethically*.”⁹¹³ The more we accept our imperfections, the more we are able to accept others in their imperfection and cease burdening them with our shadow.⁹¹⁴ The Shadow, the dark side of us, concealed from the light, needs to be brought out into the open. Ironically, we spend the first two decades of our lives deciding what parts of ourselves to put into the bag, and the rest of our lives trying to extract them again.⁹¹⁵ Every time we recognise a shadow figure we take away some of its power. This can be a painful but important process. “To suffer the guilt, shame, despair, and anxiety of restoring them to

⁹⁰⁹ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 67.

⁹¹⁰ Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 67-68, 72.

⁹¹¹ Stevens, *Myths*, 210.

⁹¹² Jung, *Undiscovered Self*, 68.

⁹¹³ Stevens, *Myths*, 210.

⁹¹⁴ Miller, *Shadow*, 140.

⁹¹⁵ Bly, *Shadow*, 18.

consciousness is to take the first step towards wholeness.”⁹¹⁶ The goal is not to destroy the shadow but to incorporate it within the wider personality, the Self.

There are various ways in which we can become aware of and befriend our shadow. Identifying the kind of people we dislike, judge and criticize, or conversely, admire the most, can bring us face to face with our projected shadow selves. Since the shadow contains repressed material of what we admire and dislike, we may idealise people, forgetting they have a shadow, and then feel let down by them, or demonise them, overlooking their good side. Equally, other people can often see what we cannot about ourselves. We need humility to be receptive to their insights. “Freudian slips” of the tongue or behaviour also disclose our shadow. Dreams reveal the shadow by compensating for our conscious distorted picture of ourselves. In shadow dreams, the shadow usually appears as a person of the same sex, a threatening or repugnant character, perhaps giving the impression of being criminal.⁹¹⁷ Such dream characters “pursue us past every obstacle, and into the blind alleyways and eerie basements of the mind.”⁹¹⁸ Although the shadow is usually experienced as dangerous and hostile, not all shadow dreams are of the “fight or flight” variety. Shadow characters appear as our opposites, personifying neglected character traits. Dream work requires perseverance but can prove very illuminating. It should be kept in mind that dream symbols are personal to the dreamer. A number of books have been published offering a variety of approaches to dream interpretation.⁹¹⁹ As well as listening to our unconscious selves, we can observe our conscious thoughts to develop greater awareness of our emotional reactions. The shadow self is exposed when there is an over-reaction to a situation. The spiritual practices of Contemplative Prayer and Ignatian Prayer, especially the Examen, are helpful for shadow work.

In essence, this particular tool is more about taming the shadow than the ego but the ego has a key role to play. Someone with a very weak ego is in danger of becoming swamped by the shadow.⁹²⁰ Steve Shaw likens the ego to the chairperson of a committee. The shadow is composed of all the committee members. A well-run committee has the chairperson firmly taking the lead in consultation with the committee

⁹¹⁶ Stevens, *Myths*, 208.

⁹¹⁷ Miller, *Shadow*, 126.

⁹¹⁸ Fontana, *The Secret Language of Dreams*, 37.

⁹¹⁹ Examples are listed in the bibliography.

⁹²⁰ Snowden, *Jung*, 69.

members. In a very anarchistic shadow committee, the ego must bring about order.⁹²¹ Shaw adds that we do not do this in our own strength but by the grace of God, who is the final authority for the ego: “Only when the roots of our ego go down into and are nourished by this ultimate power will it have the authority to put our shadow characters in their place.”⁹²²

Shadow work is, on the one hand, deeply self-affirmative, since it accepts the whole of our selves, however reprehensible. Equally, it calls for a denial, that is, a re-channelling of destructive, selfish shadow instincts. It is about self-transformation. To gain awareness of and begin to integrate the shadow is a mark of authenticity. We shift now from unconscious to more conscious mental processes in considering another Jungian based psychological tool.

Personality Theory: Myers-Briggs

Personality theory is a fitting way to explore and develop emotional intelligence, since it is concerned with internal, intrapersonal, and external, interpersonal, processes.⁹²³ A number of personality theories exist. We have already weighed the Enneagram in the theological/psychological balance and found it wanting in its disparagement of the ego. By contrast, Myers-Briggs theory requires a healthy ego. Whilst it can be categorised as a pop psychology, given its accessibility, Myers-Briggs has a solid theoretical base and is established upon extensive research. Psychological type theory was first devised by Jung to explain the normal differences between healthy people. Based upon his observations, Jung concluded that variations in behaviour result from differentiation in mental mechanisms, for example extraversion over introversion. People possess both but one will predominate.⁹²⁴ His book *Psychological Types* separated out differing functions and processes of behaviour. He believed that much of our mental activity is either an act of becoming aware of new information, or an act of coming to a conclusion about that information.⁹²⁵

Independently, around the time of the First World War, Katharine Briggs became intrigued by the similarities and differences in human personality. She started to

⁹²¹ Shaw, *Dancing with Your Shadow*, 68-69.

⁹²² Shaw, *Shadow*, 94.

⁹²³ Pearman, *Introduction to Type and Emotional Intelligence*, 1.

⁹²⁴ Jung, *Psychological Types*, 9-10.

⁹²⁵ Jung, *Psychological Types*, 412-517.

develop her own typology before discovering Jung had already devised a similar system of psychological types. Briggs abandoned her own work and adopted Jung's names and concepts, modifying and elaborating them.⁹²⁶ Her daughter, Isabel Myers, absorbed her mother's fascination for Jungian typology. She maintained an optimistic view of human potential; her dream was for people to recognize and appreciate their gifts and understand and respect human differences. Working with her mother, she determined to devise a method of making the theory of practical benefit.⁹²⁷ Having no formal training in psychology or statistical analysis, the mother and daughter team self educated and Isabel apprenticed herself to Edward Hay, a qualified expert in the required tools of test construction, scoring, validation and statistics. The psychometric questionnaire used to determine a person's psychological type, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), was formulated, refined and trialled on thousands of students. In 1975 publication of the MBTI was transferred to Consulting Psychologists Press and the Center for Applications of Psychological Type became a research laboratory of the Indicator.⁹²⁸ Myers lifelong work was distilled in her book *Gifts Differing*, the work of three generations, also bearing the final stamp of her son Peter.⁹²⁹ The MBTI is now one of the most popular self-awareness tools available⁹³⁰, influential in all dimensions of life: marriage/relationships, organisations and work, the learning environment, church dynamics and spirituality.

The theory is that variation in human behaviour is down to differences in mental functioning, concerning the way people prefer to use their minds.⁹³¹ Preferences are inborn and type development starts at an early age.⁹³² There are four preference dimensions, four basic pairs of opposites, made up of functions and attitudes. According to Myers, Jung identified four different functions: Sensing (S) and Intuition (N) as two opposite ways of perceiving, taking in information; Thinking (T) and Feeling (F) as two opposite ways of judging, making decisions. He identified four different attitudes, to do with the way we use our functions: Extraversion (E) and Introversion (I), corresponding to the source and focus of our energy; then Judging (J) or Perceiving (P), which indicate our preferred way of dealing with the external world.⁹³³

⁹²⁶ Isabel Briggs Myers, *Gifts Differing*, ix-x; Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing Me Knowing You*, vii,13.

⁹²⁷ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, ix-xii; Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, vii.

⁹²⁸ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, x-xii.

⁹²⁹ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, xiii.

⁹³⁰ Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 10.

⁹³¹ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 1.

⁹³² Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 10,176-78.

⁹³³ Katharine Myers and Linda Kirby, *Introduction to Type Dynamics and Development*, 6.

These eight fundamental patterns of mental activity are characterised briefly as follows: Sensors become aware of things directly through the five senses. Concerned with concrete, literal experience, they are observant of detail and prefer to handle present practicalities. By contrast, Intuitives seek meanings through imagination and insight, preferring theory and abstract thinking; the language of word, symbol and metaphor. They are focused upon the big picture and making connections. They use a “sixth sense”, indirect perception via the unconscious. Intuitives live for the future, imagining possibilities.⁹³⁴ Thinking is an impersonal, logical, analytical process with objective truth and justice as its goal. Thinkers like to prove a point for the sake of clarity. They have a head over heart, business-like approach. In opposition, Feeling types make judgements based upon personal subjective values: heart over head. They are more interested in people and their feelings than the pursuit of truth; they need harmony.⁹³⁵

Extraverts are directed towards the outer world of people and things. They are outgoing, friendly, sociable, talkative and accessible. They live life in order to understand it, giving breadth to life. Introverts are directed towards the inner world of concepts and ideas. They give depth to life and are more private, needing space. They are often seen as shy and take longer to get to know. They cannot live life until they understand it.⁹³⁶ Judging types like to have things under control and dislike surprises. Systematic, structured, purposeful and well planned, ordering their lives and possessions. Judgers are decisive, follow through upon decisions, enjoy getting a task finished, meeting deadlines in good time. By contrast, Perceptive types prefer to keep options open. They dislike being pinned down and may fail to make a decision at all. Perceivers live for the moment and exhibit a tolerant, “live and let live” attitude. They go with the flow, aiming to miss nothing. They are naturally curious, spontaneous, flexible, adaptable and easily distracted.⁹³⁷

The four preferences combine to determine sixteen different but equally valid personality types.⁹³⁸ We develop behaviour traits based upon the interaction of our preferences, or *Type Dynamics*.⁹³⁹ Normally we develop a dominant process found within the central letters of the personality type profile: S or N, T or F, which is the

⁹³⁴ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 2,57-63; Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 20-24.

⁹³⁵ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 3,65-68; Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 24-28.

⁹³⁶ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 7,53-56; Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 17-18.

⁹³⁷ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 8-9,69-75; Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 28-32.

⁹³⁸ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 27-29.

⁹³⁹ Katharine Myers and Kirby, *Type Dynamics*, 1.

“driving force of our personality”.⁹⁴⁰ The dominant process overshadows the other processes and shapes the personality accordingly; this was the basis of Jung’s “Psychological types”.⁹⁴¹ The dominant process is absorbed in the world that interests us most and where we best function: for extraverts, the outer world, and for introverts, the inner. For balance, people need to develop the second, auxiliary process, identified as the other letter in the central pair of preferences, which takes the opposite orientation.⁹⁴² If the dominant process is a judging function, the auxiliary will be a perceiving one and vice versa. In extraverts, the dominant process, being extraverted, is immediately apparent but in introverts the dominant process is introverted. Most people see only the side introverts present to the outer world, generally their second best. Thus, the success of introverts contact with the outside world depends upon the effectiveness of their auxiliary.⁹⁴³ The third, tertiary, preference is the opposite of our auxiliary. The least preferred, inferior, function is the opposite of the dominant.⁹⁴⁴ For example, for an INTJ, the dominant function is (introverted) Intuition, the auxiliary is (extraverted) Thinking, the tertiary is (extraverted or introverted) Feeling and the inferior is (introverted) Sensing.

According to Jungian theory, the dominant function is the most conscious and the inferior function is closest to the unconscious and the most difficult to use in conscious life.⁹⁴⁵ As long as the conscious dominant function is in operation, the unconscious energy of the inferior function remains dormant. However, when the conscious energy diminishes sufficiently, the unconscious energy erupts and takes over the personality: an “in the grip” experience. The person behaves out of character. The inferior function is expressed in an uncontrollable and immature fashion; a caricature of a person with that dominant function, being exaggerated or extreme. Usually the individual is unaware of the change in themselves until afterwards.⁹⁴⁶ The inferior function should not be confused with the Jungian concept of the shadow: “the inferior function describes the *form* in which the *contents* of the Shadow are likely to appear.”⁹⁴⁷

⁹⁴⁰ Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 34.

⁹⁴¹ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 12.

⁹⁴² Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 36.

⁹⁴³ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 12-14.

⁹⁴⁴ Katharine Myers and Kirby, *Type Dynamics*, 5.

⁹⁴⁵ Katharine Myers and Kirby, *Type Dynamics*, 6.

⁹⁴⁶ Naomi Quenk, *In the Grip*, 5-8.

⁹⁴⁷ Quenk, *Grip*, 50. Italics original.

Type Development is concerned with consciously and purposely developing our inferior and tertiary functions to avoid one-sidedness.⁹⁴⁸ Jung saw individual development as a lifelong process. In the first half of life energy is directed towards development of the dominant and then the auxiliary function. Later in life, the focus shifts to the less-preferred functions, the unexplored potential. This is part of the midlife transition, the gateway to later life development. The task of the second half of life is to move towards full development of oneself.⁹⁴⁹ This does not mean equal development and use of all the functions. Myers-Briggs theory is about opposites, attention and energy has to be directed towards one in each pair of functions at any one time with an overall leader. The goal of type development is the ability to use each mental process competently as appropriate.⁹⁵⁰ “The result is a completeness of personality and a new flexibility in choosing which parts to draw on and express in different situations.”⁹⁵¹ An interpersonal strategy also utilises the strengths of others with different preferences to us to compensate for our own deficiencies.⁹⁵²

Our MBTI type reflects how we engage with the different components of emotional intelligence. Pearman links introversion and extraversion with intrapersonal and interpersonal arenas of emotional intelligence. Intrapersonal components of emotional intelligence include: self-awareness, self-regulation, emotional self-control, flexibility, motivation, achievement, resilience, well-being and stress management. Interpersonal components of emotional intelligence entail: demonstrative empathy, energy, social skill, tolerance, persuasiveness and leadership skills.⁹⁵³ Pearman then identifies how each of the eight functions, namely Sensing, Intuition, Thinking and Feeling, in both introverted and extraverted forms, are employed in the intrapersonal or interpersonal emotional intelligence arenas.⁹⁵⁴ To improve emotional intelligence, we can identify our typical patterns of using the mental processes and decide whether they are appropriate for given situations. If not, we can learn to use the less accessed functions for a more constructive response.⁹⁵⁵ To assist with this, Pearman offers emotional intelligence frameworks, including areas for development, for each of the sixteen types.⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁴⁸ Quenk, *Grip*, 9.

⁹⁴⁹ Katharine Myers and Kirby, *Type Dynamics*, 21.

⁹⁵⁰ Katharine Myers and Kirby, *Type Dynamics*, 23.

⁹⁵¹ Katharine Myers and Kirby, *Type Dynamics*, 30.

⁹⁵² Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 120.

⁹⁵³ Pearman, *Type and Emotional Intelligence*, 11-12.

⁹⁵⁴ Pearman, *Type and Emotional Intelligence*, 14-17.

⁹⁵⁵ Pearman, *Type and Emotional Intelligence*, 13.

⁹⁵⁶ Pearman, *Type and Emotional Intelligence*, 20-51.

There is some controversy over the idea of distinct personality types, particularly in academic psychological circles.⁹⁵⁷ Sometimes the criticism is levelled that it is pigeon-holing people. In its defence, the MBTI is designed to be descriptive not prescriptive. People self-type according to individual preferences. Bayne notes that there is substantial evidence for the validity of MBTI theory but more on preferences than type dynamics.⁹⁵⁸ Lesley Francis comments: “The strengths of psychological type theory are that it is based on empirical observation, and that the profiles offered to individuals are a function of the way in which they have reported their type through the self-completion questionnaire.”⁹⁵⁹ Francis points out that a psychological test needs to pass the criteria of reliability and validity. The family of personality tests of which Myers-Briggs is a part are generally considered to pass these tests.⁹⁶⁰

Being a self-report instrument, the MBTI is open to operator error. Questions could be answered according to how the person thinks s/he should be. It could be affected by someone’s mood or stress levels on the day.⁹⁶¹ Whilst the theory is that we are born with our ideal type, type development may be skewed by background and the pressures and expectations of the environment. When parents fail to accept their children’s type and encourage them to be themselves, their type can become falsified.⁹⁶² Myers notes that the strengths of each type are only apparent when there is adequate type development, requiring sufficient mastery of the chosen dominant and auxiliary processes. Otherwise people are likely only to display the characteristic weaknesses of their type.⁹⁶³ Where preferences have been sufficiently developed, provided the indicator is completed with care and honesty, it is likely to be a sound verifier of type. The person should know whether or not the “reported type” fits. If not, they can see which of the other type descriptions does and arrive at a “self assessed” best-fit type.⁹⁶⁴

On balance, the MBTI is a helpful tool. It is not perfect but it provides a robust framework. Myers-Briggs theory fits with the psychological picture of chapter two. It is affirmative of the self, whilst calling for an honest self-assessment. Personality in itself is regarded as value neutral; it entails self-acceptance and growth, recognition and

⁹⁵⁷ Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 10.

⁹⁵⁸ Bayne, *Psychological Types at Work*, 4.

⁹⁵⁹ Francis, *Faith and Psychology*, 90.

⁹⁶⁰ Francis, *Psychology*, 18-19

⁹⁶¹ Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 39; Isabel Briggs Myers, *Introduction to Type*, 12.

⁹⁶² Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 189-191; Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 38.

⁹⁶³ Briggs Myers, *Gifts*, 181-184.

⁹⁶⁴ Goldsmith and Wharton, *Knowing*, 39-40, Briggs Myers, *Introduction*, 11-12.

management of one's strengths and weaknesses. Type development requires a capable ego. It entails a conscious and concerted effort. However, Myer-Briggs is not just a navel gazing endeavour, it is also relational, recognising the benefits of working with others and how relationships can be helped or hindered. Self-denial may be in order when we need to adapt ourselves to situations in order to bring about the best outcomes. Sacrifices may be necessary in the service of others. This fits with a call to discipleship, also in terms cultivating self-awareness and the refinement of our personality. While Myers-Briggs is classified as a psychological tool, it has been applied to prayer life.⁹⁶⁵ There is not the scope to explore that here; rather we seek now to fuse psychological insights with spiritual ones as we turn to spiritual disciplines to aid self-awareness.

The Spiritual Approach: Fostering “Spiritual Intelligence”?

Danah Zohar introduced the concept of “Spiritual Intelligence” into popular spirituality. Spiritual intelligence is used to find meaning and purpose for our lives and place them in a wider context. Zohar explains SQ is “the soul’s intelligence... that rests in that deep part of the self that is connected to wisdom from beyond the ego, or conscious mind”.⁹⁶⁶ Noble as it sounds, caution is urged. Zohar offers guidance on finding our own “path” in preference to “the One Way, the One Truth, the One God.”⁹⁶⁷ From the perspective of this thesis, it is maintained that true spiritual intelligence is fostered not only in conjunction with the deepest centre of the Self but in relationship with the Trinitarian Godhead. Spirituality is rooted in a tradition and community, as Marie McCarthy asserts: “Authentic spirituality can never be an isolated, privatized, individual affair. It is always located in a particular community from which it derives flavour, character and efficacy.”⁹⁶⁸ Merton blames the spirit of individualism of the modern West for a disastrous outcome of Christian prayer: “The interior life of the individualist... closes in on itself without dread, and rests in itself with more or less permanent satisfaction.”⁹⁶⁹ Authentic spirituality is not self-absorbed and self-serving but “includes the dispositions and disciplines of contemplative awareness, effective action in the world, rootedness in community, openness, non-dualistic thinking and action, and discernment.”⁹⁷⁰ With this in mind, we now focus upon two awareness practices; the first forms a thread running

⁹⁶⁵ Duncan, *Pray Your Way*.

⁹⁶⁶ Zohar, *Spiritual Intelligence*, 9.

⁹⁶⁷ Zohar, *Spiritual*, 225-281.

⁹⁶⁸ McCarthy, “Spirituality in a Postmodern Era,” in *The Blackwell Reader*, 200.

⁹⁶⁹ Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 134.

⁹⁷⁰ McCarthy, “Spirituality,” 199.

through the mystics featured and the second derives specifically from the teaching of Ignatius. Both have found a foothold in current Christian practice.

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive.... It is a vivid realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent and infinitely abundant Source. Contemplation is, above all, awareness of the reality of that Source.... in contemplation we know by "unknowing." Or, better, we know *beyond* all knowing or "unknowing."⁹⁷¹

Thomas Merton considered contemplation to be "the summit of the Christian life of prayer".⁹⁷² His writings made this ancient way of prayer accessible to the modern world. Contemplative prayer, or contemplation, is also referred to as "Christian meditation" or "the Prayer of the Heart", where we recall that the heart is the organ of spiritual awareness, "the deepest psychological ground of one's personality".⁹⁷³ In 1991, The Benedictine monk John Main founded The World Community for Christian Meditation to promote the practice of contemplative prayer in our times. Main writes, "The really contemporary challenge is that we should recover a way of deep prayer that will lead us into the experience of union, away from the surface distractions and self-piety."⁹⁷⁴ These two monks, followed by other advocates, have been instrumental in reviving for today a practice that goes right back to the Desert Fathers.

Merton notes that Macarius gave one of the earliest descriptions of the "prayer of the heart", consisting "in invoking the name of Christ, with profound attention, in the very ground of one's being".⁹⁷⁵ The hermit St Anthony saw the repetition of this kind of short prayer as an opportunity to occupy the surface of the mind while turning our whole attention to the presence of God. He said: "The prayer is not perfect in which the monk is conscious of himself or of the fact that he is praying."⁹⁷⁶ We encountered this too in the teaching of Cassian on unceasing prayer, which has served as a basis for Main's approach.⁹⁷⁷ Keeping the name of Jesus ever present in the ground of their being, afforded the ancient monks a means of controlling thoughts and resisting temptation.⁹⁷⁸

⁹⁷¹ Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*, 1. Italics original.

⁹⁷² Merton, *Prayer*, 117.

⁹⁷³ Merton, *Prayer*, 38.

⁹⁷⁴ Main, *Word into Silence*, ix.

⁹⁷⁵ Merton, *Prayer*, 22.

⁹⁷⁶ Barrington-Ward, *The Jesus Prayer*, 35.

⁹⁷⁷ Main, *Silence*, 57-61.

⁹⁷⁸ Merton, *Prayer*, 24.

In fact, Main sees prayer as entering into the prayer experience of Jesus himself. The personal experience of Jesus is the eternally present reality at the heart of every human consciousness. He elucidates, “The ultimate secret has been revealed: ‘...Christ in you’. In prayer we are not striving to make something happen. It has already happened. We are simply realizing what already is, by travelling deeper into the unified consciousness of Jesus”.⁹⁷⁹ In John’s gospel, Jesus invites us into a mystical union and confers on us the glory his Father gave him: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us... The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me” (John 17:21-23).

Contemplation helps us to connect with the deeper Self/God at the ground of our being. It enables us to become aware of ego motives and have a more enduring awareness of the true/real self.⁹⁸⁰ We seek “the deepest ground of our identity in God... a direct existential grasp, a personal experience of the deepest truths of life and faith, *finding ourselves in God’s truth*.”⁹⁸¹ More simply, “we seek God himself present in the depths of our being”.⁹⁸² For Merton, the aim is to become more conscious of the basic relationship between creature and Creator, “to come to know him through the realization that our very being is penetrated with his knowledge and love for us.”⁹⁸³ Prayer is the doorway into a union of love. Draper affirms, “As we contemplate... and as we reach out for God, we begin to find union with God within. The witnessing presence that has been there all along is the witness of God; we see with the eyes of God.”⁹⁸⁴

Merton explains all prayer is aimed at “*purity of heart... a new spiritual identity – the ‘self’ as recognized in the context of realities willed by God*”.⁹⁸⁵ Thus, contemplation may be experienced as a “death”: “the self undergoes a kind of emptying and an apparent destruction, until, reduced to emptiness, it no longer knows itself apart from God.”⁹⁸⁶ Main articulates this paradox of discipleship: “We are led from depth to depth of purifying simplification until, having contacted the very ground of our being, we find the life we laid down and the self we surrendered in the Other.”⁹⁸⁷ This concurs with the

⁹⁷⁹ Main, *Silence*, x.

⁹⁸⁰ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 11

⁹⁸¹ Merton, *Prayer*, 82. Italics original.

⁹⁸² Merton, *Prayer*, 34

⁹⁸³ Merton, *Prayer*, 103-104.

⁹⁸⁴ Draper, *Spiritual*, 123.

⁹⁸⁵ Merton, *Prayer*, 83. Italics original.

⁹⁸⁶ Merton, *Prayer*, 94.

⁹⁸⁷ Main, *Silence*, 30.

dynamic of the self-affirmation/self-denial resolution of the previous chapter. We leave self behind, participating in the dying of Jesus, in order to enter into the mystery and prayer of the risen Christ deep within our being:

As we enter the silence within us... we are entering a void in which we are unmade. We cannot remain the person we were or thought we were. But we are, in fact, not being destroyed but awakened to the eternally fresh source of our being. We become aware that we are being created... springing from the Creator's hand and returning to him in Love.⁹⁸⁸

Prayer of the heart is a journey into silence, stillness, simplicity and listening. In terms of the how of contemplation, we need first to come to an interior stillness and silence, where silence is an absence of noise and thought. It means quieting the surface mind. A technique recommended to achieve this is the use of a prayer-word, known as a "formula" in Latin and a "mantra" in the East.⁹⁸⁹ *The Cloud of Unknowing* advocates a very little word, such as, Jesus or love.⁹⁹⁰ Main suggests *maranatha*, aramaic for "come Lord".⁹⁹¹ Alternatively, the Hebrew name for God, *Yahweh*, can be used, which sounds like breathing. The prayer-word functions like giving a dog a bone to stop it barking. We give the mind a word to keep it quiet. It is permissible to just focus upon the breath, a cross, candle, or icon instead. The most important thing is to still the mind so that it ceases to be involved with all the countless invasive thoughts which crowd it. It is about paying attention to God rather than thinking about God. The contemplative remains relaxed yet in a state of alert attentiveness. Essentially, it is not about method but attitude: "Faith, openness, attention, reverence, expectation, supplication, trust, joy".⁹⁹² It requires humility, patience and a sense of our own poverty: "meditation should begin with the realization of our nothingness and helplessness in the presence of God."⁹⁹³

The identity of the ego is based on doing, whereas the identity of the deeper self is based on being.⁹⁹⁴ Historically, the active and the contemplative life have often been seen in opposition but, as Merton points out, St Benedict and Peter of Celles saw no such conflict.⁹⁹⁵ Contemplative prayer is not the preserve of the religious. Nor is it a self-indulgent, isolationist, escapist activity. Merton spells out the paradox: "The more

⁹⁸⁸ Main, *Silence*, 30.

⁹⁸⁹ Main, *Silence*, 10.

⁹⁹⁰ *Cloud of Unknowing*, 31.

⁹⁹¹ Main, *Silence*, 10.

⁹⁹² Merton, *Prayer*, 39.

⁹⁹³ Merton, *Prayer*, 86.

⁹⁹⁴ Nataraja, *Dancing*, 87-88.

⁹⁹⁵ Merton, *Prayer*, 74.

we are alone, the more we are together; and the more we are in society”.⁹⁹⁶ In actuality, “the way of prayer brings us face to face with the sham and indignity of the false self that seeks to live for itself alone”.⁹⁹⁷ Practitioners discover that contemplative awareness overflows into and influences daily life. “The all-important aim in Christian meditation is to allow Gods’ mysterious and silent presence within us to become more and more not only *a* reality, but *the* reality in our lives... which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, to everything we are.”⁹⁹⁸ The fruits of the being are revealed in doing: an increase in understanding, love and compassion in relationships. Contemplation becomes the root of transforming action, as Williams articulates: “we have got to grow into a mature stillness, a poise and an openness to others and the world, so that it can also be a transformative mode of living in which the act of God can come through, so as to change ourselves, our immediate environment, our world.”⁹⁹⁹

The Examen

Chapter three introduced *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Here, we concentrate upon “The Examination of Consciousness”, or “Examen”, also linked with daily life, being an awareness review. It is a practical prayer method, now commonly included in courses on prayer. Ignatius developed it as a primary spiritual discipline. George Aschenbrenner declares, “The examen gives our daily contemplative experience of God real bite into all our daily living; it is an important means to finding God in everything”.¹⁰⁰⁰ Ignatius called it the “Examination of the Conscience” but it is not a narrow moralistic tool.¹⁰⁰¹ For clarity, Aschenbrenner coined the now distinctive term: “Consciousness Examen”.¹⁰⁰² Aschenbrenner describes it as “a daily intensive exercise of discernment in a person’s life.”¹⁰⁰³ The goal of the Examen is a discerning heart. It is traditionally carried out at the end of the day as a way of attending to God’s presence in everyday experience. It is also a means of ego-observation. This prayer exercise enables us to become more aware of the inner movements that affect us, concerned with noticing our moods and feelings, the impulses that underlie our actions. At the heart of the Examen, is the “discernment of spirits”. We become attuned to the movements of

⁹⁹⁶ Merton, *Contemplation*, 51.

⁹⁹⁷ Merton, *Prayer*, 25-26.

⁹⁹⁸ Main, *Silence*, 3. Italics original.

⁹⁹⁹ Williams, *Disciples*, 17.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Aschenbrenner, “Consciousness Examen,” *Review for Religious*, 14-21.

¹⁰⁰¹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, para.32, 18.

¹⁰⁰² Aschenbrenner, “Examen,” 14-21.

¹⁰⁰³ Aschenbrenner, “Examen,” 14.

the Holy Spirit and the “evil spirit” within us, that which is of God and that which is not. In each of us there are two types of spontaneity: towards God and away from God. Through the Examen we can sift our urges to ascertain their source and direction. In our deeper feelings God draws us to Himself, while the sinful nature and fallen world take us away from God. It helps us to become sensitive to and unafraid of our inner moods, accepting the whole of our Self, whilst aiming to live from the deeper level of the true self. The focus is on how God is moving in us and how generously we are responding to God’s love. First of all we need to come to a point of stillness, seeking an awareness of God’s loving gaze. Then follows five basic steps based upon the method given by Ignatius:¹⁰⁰⁴

1) *Prayer for light*: This is a prayer for divine enlightenment. We ask the Spirit of Truth to show us what God wants us to see. Timothy Gallagher writes: “we pray for deeper *insight* into God’s concrete workings in our day and into any interior movements opposed to those workings, so that we may *act* more surely in overcoming all that hinders our freedom for growth in our relationship with God.”¹⁰⁰⁵

2) *Thanksgiving*: We cast our minds back over the day, asking to see what we need to be thankful for and notice what emerges. We savour the experiences, allowing gratitude to take hold of us and express this to God. This leads to the realisation that all is gift.¹⁰⁰⁶

3) *Review*: Again we look over the events of the day, this time asking the Spirit to reveal where God’s presence has been in our life. We need to become attuned to our interior feelings, moods and urges: the God-inspired thoughts that offer spiritual clarity and the enemy-inspired thoughts (from the tempter or within the self), which lead to spiritual harm.¹⁰⁰⁷ Ignatius employed the terms “spiritual consolation” and “spiritual desolation” to describe the uplifting or heavy affective interior movements:

I call it consolation... every increase of faith, hope and love, and all interior joy that invites and attracts to what is heavenly and to the salvation of one’s soul by filling it with peace and quiet.¹⁰⁰⁸

Desolation is the opposite:

¹⁰⁰⁴ Puhl, *Exercises*, para.43, 23.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer*, 69. Italics original as in subsequent quotations.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Aschenbrenner, “Examen,” 14-21.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Gallagher, *Examen*, 78.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Puhl, *Exercises*, para.316, 142.

darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations which lead to want of faith, want of hope, want of love. The soul is wholly slothful, tepid, sad, and separated, as it were, from its Creator...¹⁰⁰⁹

We look for where the spiritual consolations have been and where God might have been leading us through them, and also, the spiritual desolations and our response to them.¹⁰¹⁰

We examine the evident thoughts and feelings, seeking to uncover their origin and the underlying attitude or area of un-freedom. Questions to facilitate the review process might be: Where was I drawn to/away from God? What was life giving/life denying? Where was I able to give and receive most/least love? We notice what stands out, for instance: joy, pain, turmoil, increase of love, anger, harmony, anxiety, freedom or isolation and whether the desires of our own hearts are in accord with God's desire.

When we become sensitive and serious enough about loving God, we begin to realize some changes must be made... He is interiorly nudging us in one area and reminding us that if we are really serious about Him this one aspect of ourselves must be changed.¹⁰¹¹

4) *Asking for forgiveness*: We begin to respond to God's personal challenge to us. Having identified the particular area we need to focus our attention on, we engage in a colloquy with Christ. We express what needs to be expressed: praise, sorrow, desire for change, intercession, and seek forgiveness where needed without self-judgement. "Step four liberates, transforms, and joyfully energizes us when in praying it we move spiritually from *our* asking for forgiveness to an awareness of *God's* response".¹⁰¹²

5) *Help for tomorrow*: "The examen in its fifth step is the prayer of *spiritual progress*."¹⁰¹³ Ignatius considers his past experience with the future in mind. Aware of how God's love is calling us to grow, we focus upon tomorrow as anticipated and plan how to respond to God's call.¹⁰¹⁴ We commit the day ahead to God and ask for the grace we need: to see what God desires of us and to act upon it.

[T]here should be a great desire to face the future with renewed vision and sensitivity as we pray both to recognize even more the subtle ways in which the Lord will greet us and to hear His Word call us in the existential situation of the future and to respond to His call with more faith, humility and courage.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰⁰⁹ Puhl, *Exercises*, para.317, 142.

¹⁰¹⁰ Gallagher, *Examen*, 85; Puhl, *Exercises*, pars.313-317, 141-142.

¹⁰¹¹ Aschenbrenner, "Examen," 14-21.

¹⁰¹² Gallagher, *Examen*, 92.

¹⁰¹³ Gallagher, *Examen*, 96.

¹⁰¹⁴ Gallagher, *Examen*, 97.

¹⁰¹⁵ Aschenbrenner, "Examen," 14-21.

There are variations on this five stage approach and it may be simplified when time is short. After practicing the Examen for a period, we might reflect on what this reveals about the larger pattern of our lives and what that suggests about our deepest calling or purpose in God. Gallagher writes: “The examen gives us the insight and freedom we need to *respond* to God’s leading in our lives rather than react unreflectively to the flow of daily events.”¹⁰¹⁶ Whilst the Examen demands discipline and effort on our part, essentially it is a work of grace, God’s gift to us.¹⁰¹⁷ In the Examen, self-examination takes place in dialogue with God. Faithfully practised, the Examen has the potential to be profoundly transformative. We begin to develop a greater awareness in daily life of the pretensions of the ego and the promptings of the Spirit and aspire to be free of all that hinders our journey towards Christ. Hence, it is “the prayer of *continuing spiritual growth*.”¹⁰¹⁸ The Examen is self and world affirming but, at the same time, it tutors us to recognise what should be denied in order to respond to God’s call upon our lives, for the greater glory of God.

Shadow work, Myers-Briggs, Contemplative Prayer and the Examen are sound popular appropriations of the psychological and spiritual wisdom of chapters two and three. These self-awareness tools train the ego to respond to the Self and God, rather than operating unthinkingly within its own horizons. They are self-accepting and fault-finding in their drive for authenticity. Spiritual enlightenment is best accompanied by psychological insight for transformation to be genuine. The Examen, for instance, requires emotional intelligence in tracing the course of our feelings. Self-observation and examination are critical. Mobsby emphasizes, “Christian discipleship, the call to contemplative action, is about facing the sins and thoughts that distort, through a balanced and contemplative spiritual life, sustained in the power and love of God.”¹⁰¹⁹ We are simultaneously saints and sinners. We are justified by faith but God desires our sanctification, our becoming like Christ, which requires daily assent to God’s perfect will. Prayer penetrates our whole existence. Solitude and interiority should not be mistaken for individualism. “Genuine contemplative awareness” leads to “a deep immersion in the world.”¹⁰²⁰ Loving well is the essence of true spirituality and requires

¹⁰¹⁶ Gallagher, *Examen*, 172.

¹⁰¹⁷ Gallagher, *Examen*, 35.

¹⁰¹⁸ Gallagher, *Examen*, 161.

¹⁰¹⁹ Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 163.

¹⁰²⁰ McCarthy, “Spirituality”, 200.

emotional maturity. A contemplative spirituality means not only being fully present to God but also prayerfully present to others.¹⁰²¹

Conclusion

Ego development or ego denial: Is there a Christian case for a healthy ego? It is time to pronounce a verdict. The answer is a qualified “yes”. To deny the ego its God given existence is to deny our unique vocation in Christ. However, it has been argued that the isolated ego, characterised by the extreme and expressive individualism of today, signifies a diminished understanding of personhood. The ego needs context. From a psychological perspective, the Jungian model of the Self is helpfully expansive; whilst the ego is valid, there is so much more to us than ego. We need to keep in view the greater and mystical Self. Happold correlates the psychological and spiritual: “Jung sometimes calls the self the *whole*, sometimes the *periphery*, at other times the *centre of the psyche*. It is... described in psychological terms, that faculty or organ of the psyche which the mystics call the spark, apex, centre, or ground of the soul. It is that in the personality through which man has contact with the Divine.”¹⁰²² Whilst some mystics seem to have no regard for the “ego” self, there is clear validation of what is variously termed as the deep, inner, real, or true self. It has been suggested that this deeper self corresponds to the centre of the Jungian Self. The possibility of a point of convergence between the worlds of psychology and mysticism is welcome.

It transpires that ego development and ego denial are not mutually exclusive. The paradox is that the healthy, mature ego is one which has learnt to say “no” to its self-centred demands; that it is not at the centre of the universe. It is less focused upon itself and more attuned to the guiding voice of the Self, the deeper self, wherein Christ dwells. The mystics looked at in chapter three have much to teach us about self-denial in order to discover the true self. Nevertheless, the ego must be disciplined not destroyed. As we learnt in chapter two, neither the ego nor the shadow can be split off from a person. The integrity and healthy development of the ego depends upon it remaining connected to the Self. We come across the notion of the false self, the inauthentic self, in both the worlds of psychology and spirituality. We can deny the fallen/false self and affirm the authentic/redeemed self that is under the grace of God.

¹⁰²¹ Scazzero, *Spirituality*, 179-180.

¹⁰²² Happold, *Mysticism*, 50. Italics original.

The ego development/ego denial paradox is recast in a new framework of relationality: you give yourself in order to find self. Self-affirmation and self-denial are not binary opposites. The dichotomy is thoroughly overcome in the social doctrine of the Trinity, outlined in chapter four. By analogy, it allows us to be one with God without confusion, whilst retaining our own identity. By abandoning ourselves in unity with God we are affirmed. We become who we are in relation to God. When we deny ourselves in order to relate properly to God, we find our true selves and deepest desire in Christ. We are not an end in ourselves. We are destined for relationship not only with God, but also with our fellow human beings. Christ sets an example through his self-giving to the world and in the inter-Trinitarian relations. God abandons himself to us on the cross; we abandon ourselves to God and to one another and find ourselves in the process. The doctrine of the Trinity safeguards the sanctity of the individual. We do not lose ourselves permanently in surrendering ourselves to the Other, rather, the ego encounters the true self. This ideally finds its expression in church life. The Christian life is a common life, modelled upon the Trinity: “If church communities desire to become places of love, belonging, forgiveness, hope and justice, they will follow the values of the perichoretic Godhead.”¹⁰²³

In the “pop” spirituality we encountered in chapter one, a false dichotomy has arisen between the ego and the true self. This thesis has demonstrated that unless it has become purely identified with the idealized image and disconnected from the Self, the ego is not a false self. Granted, the psychological norm of ego, the total identification of the false self with the ego is detrimental to psychological and spiritual wholeness. The ego in itself is not the problem; it is more a question of whom the ego is serving. It becomes blinkered if serving its own selfish interests or “the enemy”, to coin an Ignatian term. The ego is part of the fallen self and can easily be led astray. The natural inclinations of the ego tend towards sin. The ego needs to be harnessed, transformed, re-born, converted; for this we need a contemplative awareness to see the bigger picture. Retaining a Jungian picture, ego alignment (with the Self), not ego-denial, is the answer, where God is at the seat of the Self. Williams affirms, “If God is at the centre, we can only live and act from the centre of our reality (and so live and act with integrity) when we let that central action of God that holds us in being have free play in us.”¹⁰²⁴ God desires for us to be at one with him and to participate in the divine life. Going further,

¹⁰²³ Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 152.

¹⁰²⁴ Williams, *Teresa*, 179.

Keating asserts: “the mystical begins when the self is surrendered at a radical level to the activity of God, so that it can no longer be thought of as acting from a centre separated from God.”¹⁰²⁵ The Christian life is not lived apart from God, nor is it self-oblivion. It is the surrendered life.

At the outset of this thesis, we witnessed the identity confusion experienced in the prevailing cultural climate. It has been contended that identity is not something to be purchased or fashioned ourselves but to be discovered in Christ, in the knowledge that we are created in the divine image. Identity is also forged in relationship with others. Daniela Augustine writes, “The path toward attaining the likeness of God demands the cooperation and alignment of the free human will with the divine will. It is a continual Christic transfiguration through sanctification of personal will and desires, in fasting from self... as an expression of incarnated love toward God and neighbour.”¹⁰²⁶ To this end, practical psychological and prayer tools have been recommended to facilitate the ego’s growth in Christ-likeness, which is the very heart of Christian discipleship.

¹⁰²⁵ Williams, *Teresa*, 185.

¹⁰²⁶ Augustine, “Image, Spirit and *Theosis*,” in *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age*, 174.

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